CHAPTER FIVE

AGRARIAN RELATIONS SINCE INDEPENDENCE

National Independence marks the important period when the crucial nexus between colonial forces and zamindars was broken. The struggle for Independence brought the Indian bourgeoisie closer to each other as they fought together with colonial forces. The Indian bourgeoisie in order to flourish depended mainly on rural economy and began to transform its basic character. Rural economy, which was feudal in nature and characterized by serfdom in the preceding period, began to interact with the capitalist forces. A few significant questions came up at this stage. How were capitalist forces transforming rural economy? What has been the direction of this change? Which mode of production can characterized the rural economy after Independence? The mode of production debate on Indian agriculture, thus requires a serious examination and this is discussed in the first part of the chapter. In the second part, peasantry and its interaction with state finds expression. A critical examination of urban concepts like 'peasant - society' 'little and great - tradition' indicate towards the dynamics of agrarian relations. An analysis of agrarian categories in India, in association with certain
primordial forces shall help in understanding the dynamics of agrarian relations with social structure.

I

Mode of Production Debate in Indian Agriculture
and its Significance

Mode of production debate in Indian agriculture has now occupied its significant place in the academic endeavours. It was initiated by a few Marxist scholars—mainly economists, and had found its expression chiefly in the journal *Economic and Political Weekly* since 1968 till date. A careful reading of this debate highlight a few important points. First, these economists have utilized Marx's *Capital* Volume 1 and 3 as a major source for the purpose of the identification of class and its analysis. Second, they have used Lenin's *Collected Works* as another main source for the understanding the praxis part of it. Third, everyone of these scholars claim that the Marxist method happens to be the most suitable one for the analysis and each one even attempts to adhere to it. Fourth, the whole debate on mode of production, class-analysis and its significance for the understanding of Indian agriculture
reflect sharp difference among the scholars. The mode of production debate among the economists has established its supremacy over sociologists in their attempts to conceptualize the agrarian social structure as a whole. It was only Andre Beteille who in 1974 had commented that terms like feudalism and capitalism should be applied to Indian agriculture only after a careful examination.

It seems necessary at the moment to examine, although briefly, why sociologists had lagged behind the economists. This question needs to be attempted from the perspective of sociology of knowledge. In fact the discipline of sociology, when it was introduced for the first time in India, was confined to only one paper taught in the subject economics at Lucknow University. It was only gradually, sociology could free itself from economics. Initially, when economics dominated over sociology, the argument had been that in order to understand economic activity it was necessary to study society because it took place there only. In other words society was considered to be a part of economic activity. There was another reason also. In India, when developed substantially, sociology as a discipline kept its close relationship with anthropology.

rather than economics. Once again it was André Béteille who came forward with the argument that Indian society provides a fertile ground for sociology and anthropology to interact and come closer to each other. In India, the limitations of anthropological concepts like "little community" had been realised, and instead "peasant society" attempted to be conceptualized. This brought (social) anthropology much earlier to (rural) sociology.

Any attempt to understand agrarian relations in India requires a rigorous examination of both: (a) mode of production debate in Indian agriculture and (b) Significance of studies in sociology and social anthropology examining rural situation in India. Here an attempt has been made to understand as well as examine the mode of production debate in Indian agriculture initiated by some economists, from the point of view of its relevance for this particular study. This has been tried to be examined from sociological point of view.

Mode of production debate in Indian agriculture began with the publication of an article "Big Farmers" by


Ashok Rudra and others. In this article the authors conclude that capitalism has not yet made emergence in the Indian agriculture. The study was conducted in 11 districts of Punjab, it was based on a sample of 261 farms, all of them were more than 20 acres in size. From sociological point of view this study could be considered as a departure from the other studies conducted earlier by economists. In this study, some empirical evidence were tried to be collected on the basis of field work. It does not seem proper at the moment to dismiss the study and its findings because they fall under the category of "empiricism". However limited it could have been from sociological point of view, but even a partial field work by the economist, not simply provides a base to his theory but also brings it nearer to the traditions of sociology and social anthropology. One point needs a clarification here. All this does not mean, nor it is being claimed here that "field work" or empiricism is the only way of engaging ourselves in sociology. But what is being pointed out here is that any attempt to study the phenomenon at empirical level provides not only scientific basis, but also brings it closer to sociology and that too in such a way as it could prepare a

ground to begin interdisciplinary studies. It is a matter to welcome economists for doing that. But on the other hand such attempts of economists' are always open to be questioned from sociological point of view, particularly for the methodology adopted and conclusions derived.

Ashok Rudra and others in their article referred above have presented several informations as empirical data on rural Punjab. According to them there are three districts out of eleven in which there are big size farms i.e. having more than 20 acres of land. In Ferozpur, Bhatinda and Patiala the percentage of big farms to small farms were 15.87%, 15.12% and 14.29% respectively and the remaining others did not cross the double figure. It could be derived out of it that the size of (big) farms was also regionally distributed within Punjab. But as described above, the authors wish to derive out of it that capitalism had not yet developed in agriculture in Punjab. The authors go on adding one criteria after another, like number of tractors, number of pumpsets, expenditure on (big) farms, occupation of the heads of households and production per acre, as the indicators on the basis of which it could be identified whether capitalism has developed in Indian agriculture or not.
There could be a different view of the whole problem related to the development (or non-development) of capitalism in Indian agriculture. It has been argued in the later part of debate on mode of production in Indian agriculture that the very question of capitalism could not be resolved like this. Capitalists could not be identified like this and from the Marxist point of view they are simply irrelevant if they are not viewed from class-perspective in which they form a class and are dialectically related to another class opposing them. To put it differently it could be argued that the whole question of capitalism and its development in Indian agriculture must first arrive at a theoretical notion of the capitalist farmer and must identify another class opposing it. From the Marxist point of view any attempt which lack a preuse theoretical understanding of the class of capitalist farmer along with its dialectically opposing class, could succeed neither in their identification nor in praxis. And that is why time and again it has been argued that in Marxist analysis classes are not to be identified like this at the empirical level. It appears at the moment that there is a large gap between understanding and analysis of class from the Marxist point of view and its empirical referents.
After looking closely at the mode of production debate in Indian agriculture, it could be pointed out that much of it has attempted to resolve the theory vs. praxis question rather than theory vs. empirical question. In fact the questions which attempt to discuss theory vs. praxis could be easily accommodated as a natural process in Marxist analysis. There could be a few possible reasons also for that. The first and the most important reason for this perhaps is the clear-cut and most authentic writing of Marx in _Capital_ (especially its Volume 1 and 3). The second and perhaps equally important reason for it is the precise understanding, and further elaboration and explanation of it available in the _Collected Works_ of Lenin. The third reason for it seems to be lack of available data. Lenin himself found it difficult to work upon because of scarcity of the data required by him. Lenin has admitted in one of his writings that due to lack of data he overestimated the development of agriculture in Soviet Union. Lenin even said that he is very much sure that he did not expect to get the sort of data he had desired.

5. For Lenin's expression on lack of data please see his _Collected works, Volumes_ 1-40 (Fourth edition) (Translated from Russian), Moscow: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1960.
At the present status of research on agrarian relations, the Marxist point of view on the theoretical understanding of class analysis is very strong in comparison to its empirical counterpart. The theoretical adequacy of the Marxist class analysis has in fact left a very little room for the empirical one to have a dialogue with it. At the most empirical observations could be fitted in the Marxist theoretical scheme. Ashok Rudra and others who had concluded on the basis of the study of 261 big farms (having more than 20 acres of land) have been criticized precisely for this reason.

The most significant criticism of the study of Ashok Rudra and others has come from Utsa Patnaik. She prefers to take exploitation as a basis to identify the development of capitalist relations. She has even developed her own criteria to determine the nature and extent of capitalism which is based upon the criteria of exploitation. Here criteria for the identification of exploitation is the ratio of "net labour days hired in" and "family labour days on farm". Utsa Patnaik's calculations on the nature and extent of exploitation is based upon the field work

conducted by her at 66 families of "big farmers" spread over ten districts in five states of Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Mysore, Madras, and Gujarat. She had conducted this survey in 1969. Although her sample of big farmers is smaller than the one of Rudra and others' but her area of inquiry is certainly much wider, it at least covers a much larger geographical space. If carefully examined Utsa Patnaik's data could reveal more since it includes the possibility of greater variations. But besides this there are a few common points also in these two studies referred above. In both of these studies "big farmers" have been studied and were conducted initially in the area of "farm-economics". Besides this both Ashok Rudra and Utsa Patnaik have claimed to follow the Marxist approach for the examination of development (or non-development) of capitalism in Indian agriculture. In Marxist approach of class analysis, when exploitation is being studied, it could be questioned from methodological point of view that whether it should be considered appropriate (or not) to remain confined to the study of 261 or 66 families of big farmers. Or on the contrary the exbited should have also become a part of such studies. There could be another criticism related to methodology adopted in these studies. If only "big farmers" are made part of the study and "middle peasant" and "small
peasant" are not included in the study then one and perhaps very important process of Marxist formulations is missed out. Till there is no mention of "middle peasant" and "small peasant" (alongwith the agricultural labourer), the very process of change or polarization of agricultural forces into various classes could not be studied. However, in Marxist-analysis it is equally important to examine the role of middle classes alongwith the advancement of society in a chronological sequence. Study of middle classes should not only examine the Marxist notion of polarization into two opposing categories, but take sufficient care to see whether at a given moment of time (also earlier and later than that), middle-class supports the existing structure (or status quo) or support the popular uprising.

At the present stage of argument reference could be made of such an attempt in which an endeavour has been made to study the significance of middle classes in Indian in a historical perspective. B.B. Misra's influential work on the Indian middle classes in the modern period of history, points out the existence of such a phenomenon. There is a need to re-examine and re-interpret B.B. Misra's

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work from the point of view of Marxist approach. The existence of the landed middle class as described by B.B. Misra and its denial by A.R. Desai in The Social Background of Indian Nationalism brings out an important controversy. B.B. Misra has defined and placed the landed middle - class precisely as, "it considered of such landed proprietors as held undertenures in between a big Zamindar or Jagirdar and the cultivator". The point that is being emphasized here is that in the mode of production debate in Indian agriculture, the methodological requirement demands the study of not only "big-farmers" but also the landless labourers alongwith "middle peasants". But one point might be added here as a precaution. The quest for studying middle - peasantry as well as landless - labourers does not mean that nothing has been said about them in the mode of production debate. In fact Utsa Patnaik has come out with, as referred to earlier too, her own data - based study of exploitation. According to her data there exists a relationship between what she calls it the ratio of net labour days hired in to family labour days on farm (Y) and farm size (X). On the basis of the data presented by Utsa Patnaik it could be stated that for $Y = 1$, there should be corresponding value of $X = 10$ and for $Y = -1$ there should be corresponding value of $X = 1$.

8. Ibid, pp.120
It therefore also becomes important to talk of the size of the land holding. On the basis of the data presented by her it could be easily observed that 10 acres of land is the size at which one does employ wage labourer, which is equivalent to the amount of labour done by his family. When \( X = 5 \), \( Y \) has been calculated as equal to Zero. It also means that if one has below 5 acres of land then one is essentially required to work as an agricultural labourer, but if one has 5 acres of land then one does not need to employ himself as agricultural labourer, but at the same time not in a position to employ agricultural labourer at one's fields.

It is important from the point of view of this study to point out that some simplistic divisions of society like - landowner and landless, rich and poor, landlords and tenants are not sufficient. In fact it is a question of degree. Methodologically speaking, it amounts to take into consideration the quantitative aspect of qualitative categorization.

Utsa Patnaik challenging the findings (and not the data) of Ashok Rudra points out that it would be wrong to conclude that capitalism has still not emerged in Punjab. On the other hand she had asked Ashok Rudra to recalculate the
nature and extent of exploitation to understand the development of capitalism in Indian agriculture. Ashok Rudra never did it. But Utsa Patnaik has quoted some other scholars of Indian agriculture and said that capitalism has been or has taken shape there. In the support of her argument Utsa Patnaik quotes the views of Sulekh Gupta, Daniel Thorner and G. Kotowski. Besides details, this whole exercise gives rise to two questions: (1) Can classes be located empirically in the Marxist framework of analysis? and (2) Is it possible to carry forward the Marxist approach for class-analysis when one is taking into consideration quantitative aspect of data (on agricultural landholdings) and attempting to understand the degree of exploitation? This methodological stand taken by Ashok Rudra as well as by Utsa Patnaik is likely to pose some serious challenges at the level of (Marxist) theory where an earlier stand had been that class is a concept for analysis and not a tool to locate empirical referents. At this moment it could be stated here than an alternative model of explanation for this (empirical data) could emerge from structural approach in sociology and it is possible to offer its Marxist explanation.

As it has been realised by now that the gap between theoretical and analytical formulations of the concept of class in Marxist theory and its empirical
referents is so vast that it seems difficult at this stage to fill it up. Nevertheless it could be reduced. From the point of methodology, which could be adopted for the present work, it seems possible to bring into discussion another relevant concept of social structure. While doing so, the other accompanying problems related to the vague conception of social structure are well considered. The accompanying problems related to social structure have come up because of the vagueness regarding its conception since the very beginning of the discipline of sociology itself. To state it very briefly it could be stated that the concept of social structure had been seen as based upon the analogy between society and machine, society and organism. Then there are questions about its units - Radcliffe-Brown preferring social relations, Nadel advocating in favour of roles. The author is well aware of the broadness of Radcliffe-Brown's concept of social-structure and Raymond Firth's criticism that in that sense it could even be equated with society.


With these limitations of the concept of social-structure in mind, it is still possible to use it and make an attempt to bridge the gap between theoretical and analytical notions of class and the empirical material. One clarification seems necessary at the moment. It is not being claimed here that the concept of class is wider than social structure, but it is certainly much sound and precise at the theoretical level. And moreover it is possible to offer a working definition to the concept of social-structure for the present purpose. With the help of the concept of social-structure, it would perhaps be possible to make an analysis of the empirical material. In India, André Béteille seems to have done precisely this. André Béteille has tried to construct what he calls it agrarian social structure. It would be relevant first to identify various social categories (from empirical data), that constitute the structure of production process in agriculture and then to arrive at the concept of agrarian social - agriculture. Relating it with the wider concept of class could be a distant possibility at the moment. With this possibility kept open, it seems viable to provide an alternative model of explanation to the mode of production debate in Indian agriculture. The concept of social structure conceived in

the sense mentioned above could help in the sociological analysis of empirical material. We shall return to it a little later. At this stage it seems necessary to make a few more comments on the mode of production debate in Indian agriculture.

Ashok Rudra's conception of capitalism includes five criteria: (a) percentage of land rented out to total land; (b) wage payment in cash per acre of farm size; (c) value of modern capital equipment per acre of farm size; (d) percentage of produce marketed to the total produce; and (e) cash profit per acre. Ashok Rudra has attempted to see a strong relationship between various sets of these variables for the identification of capitalism in Indian agriculture.

R.S. Rao commenting on Ashok Rudra's results suggesting that capitalism had not yet emerged in Indian agriculture, said that it was due to his (Rudra's) "Strong conditions" for its identification. R.S. Rao too brings in Marxist polemics into discussion like, capitalism is to be viewed as it destroyed all pre-capitalist modes of production and more


relevant question according to him is not what capitalist farmer is but what it is becoming. Utsa Patnaik has also considered the process as important when said, "The capitalist does not suddenly appear out of the blue as a clearly defined 'pure' socio-economic type: he develops within the pre-existing, non-capitalist economic structure". On the basis of the field work conducted by her, Utsa Patnaik too has attempted to identify certain indicators of capitalism and they are like: (a) an expanding market and (2) enhanced profitability of agricultural production. She concludes it like, "A new class of capitalist farmers is emerging: this is a phenomenon common to every region, in so far as every area has been subject to the same forces albeit operating with varying intensity".

Utsa Patnaik has referred to E. Mandel's "valid" distinction between bourgeois property relations without development of capitalist relations of production accompanying them. And she restricts the application of this upto the colonial period of Indian history. Along with it

20. Ibid, pp.41.
Utsa Patnaik has also questioned the estimates of S.C. Gupta and G. Kotovsky about the extent of development of capitalism in Indian agriculture. According to their estimates in 1953-54 there were 6-7 percent of the households and 25-30 percent of the area had been under capitalist cultivation. Utsa Patnaik's disagreement has been over their consideration of wage labour as the only indicator of the development of capitalism. She states, "clearly, they (S.C. Gupta and G. Kotovsky) have taken operation with wage-labour to be a sufficient condition of capitalist organization, which in our view is incorrect".

Utsa Patnaik has made yet another remark to distinguish between what she calls it "dominant landholder" from "rich peasant". The "dominant landholder" operates on the basis of "hired wage labour" rather than giving his land on lease whereas "rich peasant" employs wage-labour so that he and his family could escape doing manual labour and he only manages as well as supervises. Apparently this distinction seems to be a minor one, but the only difference between "dominant landholder" and "rich peasant" seems to be that

22. Ibid, pp.42.
23. Ibid, pp.42.
former exercises a lot of control over village polity. This
distinction although relevant could serve the purpose better
if used for the analysis of agrarian relations during
colonial period. In that period the strong relationship
between landownership and power has been studied by Walter C.
Neal. But since national independence and with the
Zamindari abolition in the northern India this association
between power and landownership has been broken. Similarly
in the southern part of India a close association between
"caste, class and power" has been broken.

The distinction between "dominant landholder" and
"rich peasant" does not differ much from each other, perhaps
except regarding the size of land owned and put together
they are different from capitalist. Utsa Patnaik has
herself accepted this, "The characteristic of the capitalist

24. Walter c. Neal "Land is to rule" in Robert Eric
Frykenberg, Land Control and Social Structure in Indian
History (ed.), New Delhi: Manohar, pp.3-16.

25. For a precise discussion over it please see Yogendra
Singh's pioneering essay, "The changing power structure
of village community - A Case Study of Six Villages in
Eastern U.P" in A.R. Desai, Rural Society in India,
723.

26. For an assessment of changes in rural India please see
Andre Beteille's earlier work, Caste Class and Power:
Changing Patters of Straatification in Tanjore Village,
(1965), 1971.

which distinguishes him from rich peasant and dominant landholder - once necessary conditions of operation with wage-labour and sale of high proportion of product on the market have been satisfied - is, therefore, the degree of capital intensification. Utsa Patnaik's criticism of Ashok Rudra's selection of five set of indicators reflecting (lack of) capitalism has raised yet another methodological point. She does not seem to disagree on the selection of these criteria (and a positive association among them) but points it out that the very selection refers to idealised (and not real) version of capitalism. Utsa Patnaik says, "This criterion (of Ashok Rudra) would make sense only in an unreal, idealised world in which different classes existed only in their purest form, and different modes of production co-existed in a static way without contaminating each other". At this stage of argument it seems necessary to refer to the help which could possibly be taken from sociological point of view. In fact a number of dilemmas have been put to a systematic analysis in sociology and the strength of argumentation has been to treat opposing points of views as a reflection of multiplicity of choices available within the value system.

28. Ibid. pp. 47.
To make the above point a little more precise, at this stage, it seems relevant to refer here the contributions on "ideal-type" made by Max Weber. Called it by whatever name be it "pure-type" or 'real-type" it refers to the brilliant analysis of Max Weber who preferred to call it "ideal type". Max Weber's notion of "ideal-type" could be interpreted in various ways e.g. in terms of its theoretical orientation, conceptual formulation and methodological aid. Here it could serve the purpose best if taken up as a methodological aid. Weber's ideal-type concerns itself with rational as well irrational action, whereas in economics there seems to be a very little room for the analysis of irrationality associated with action.

Clarifying it Max Weber writes "When reference is made to typical cases, the term should always be understood unless otherwise stated, as meaning ideal types, which may in turn be rational or irrational as the case may be (thus in economic theory they are always rational), but in any case are always constructed with a view to adequacy on the level of meaning" (Emphasis as in the original). A slightly different version of it is possible in sociological analysis where some room has been left for irrational action.

Weber clarifies it like, "It is important to realise that in the sociological field as elsewhere, averages, and hence average types, can be formulated with a relative degree of precision only where they are concerned with differences of degree in respect to action which remains qualitatively the same". After constructing rational ideal type, "it is then possible to introduce the irrational components as accounting for the observed derivations from this hypothetical course. After that, by comparison with this (the ideal type) it is possible to understand the ways in which actual action is influenced by irrational factors of all sorts, such as effects and errors, in that they count for the derivation.

The real issue before us has been the mode of production debate in Indian agriculture. When Utsa Patnaik had raised a controversy that Ashok Rudra's formulations were purest form of capitalism and discarded it as useless, then according to any possible understanding of ideal-type of capitalist form in Indian agriculture, the data presented

30. Ibid, pp.110.

31. Max Weber's formulations as they have been presented by Talcott Parsons in "Introduction" to Max Weber, op.cit. pp.15.

32. Ibid, pp. 15.
by Ashok Rudra are very much likely not to confirm to it (the ideal type). But the real exercise following Max Weber's methodology would perhaps be first to construct the ideal-type (of capitalism in the Indian agriculture) and then to compare it with the actual situation and then understand and explain these differences (between ideal- and actual types). Here the sociological approach could help in resolving the crisis faced by economists since the former in addition to rational action includes the possibility of irrational actions also. There is an urgent need to bring the economists' model of capitalism nearer to its sociological conceptualization in order to have a precise understanding of the nature of capitalist development in Indian agriculture. Looking at the present status of researches on agrarian relations in India it can be hoped that different schools of thought might be brought together and we could some day reach at the stage of what Alfred Schutz calls it, "inter subjectivity agreement".

Ashok Rudra however tries to maintain while answering Utsa Patnaik's criticism of his earlier remarks that he wishes to maintain a strong association between

theory and empirical situation. Ashok Rudra says, "I would not accept any hypothesis, even if it were propounded by Marx or Lenin, unless it passes the test of empirical verification." This stand of Ashok Rudra brings his position nearer to sociologists and anthropologists. However it seems necessary, as it has been pointed out earlier also, at this moment to clarify the point once again that in the Marxist Scheme the developments at the level of theory are so advanced that it is difficult to relate it with data. It seems difficult not because there are certain flaws at the theoretical level, but because of the lack as well as poor quality of data. Its examples have been referred to earlier. Hypothetically if the quality of data is poor, then it is possible to interpret in favour of capitalist relations in agriculture which they might have not emerged at all. This poor quality of data have been pointed out by M.N. Srinivas who felt that there was an urgent need to collect data on different villages before pace of change after national independence alters the very nature of these villages. M.N. Srinivas had not only indicated towards a


poor quality of data but spoke about lack of data too. At about the same period i.e. during the latter part of nineteen fifties a few more publications had come up. Some of these significant contributions in the area of village studies were: a pioneering study of a village in the south India by S.C. Dube , another study by him in the northern part of India examining the impact of community development programme on a selected number of villages; an edited book by McKim Marriot appearing as a collection of articles on different villages; and another pioneering work by D.N. Majumdar . Yet another study from a different perspective by Ramkrishna Mukherjee , which was a departure from the studies quoted just above, attempted to analyse at macro-level rural phenomenon of Bengal, lacks sufficient amount of

39. D.N. majumdar, Rural profiles,
data. Ramkrishna Mukherjee has made use of secondary data collected by the scholars of Indian Statistical Institute, Calcutta for some other purpose. At several places in the book, even when the argument seems valid and precise the lack of data supporting it has come to light. For example while referring to at least 50 sub-infeudatory interests that a peasant has to face, Ramkrishna Mukherjee does not supplement it by facts.

In the studies on rural life of India, sociologist as well as social anthropologists have invariably used caste as an important unit of social structure. Ramkrishna Mukherjee has divided rural population of Bengal into three classes on the basis of their occupation. But this study too is not in line with the argument that has been developed in the mode of production debate. In fact classes have been identified at the local level and a Marxist sort of argumentation has been given. Moreover at least one point is clear as far as all these studies in general and mode of production debate in particular is concerned. In studies on mode of production debate criticisms and counter criticisms have been given, cross-national comparison are made, theoretical formulations have been criticised but nobody has questioned the data collected by others. It is not the data that has been
challenged but rather its interpretation. For us too it won't be methodology an unwise step to consult the data provided in the village studies. When such a view has been accepted, it could become possible to initiate caste-dialogue in Indian agriculture in a meaningful way.

Yet another point that requires mention about Ashok Rudra's reply (to Utsa Patnaik) is his attempt to quantify that which otherwise puts qualitatively. Ashok Rudra attempted to distinguish between small-medium and rich-peasants. He attempts to formulate the question precisely like this "how to decide from what point onwards to consider peasants as rich peasants, especially as it will be found that in most size groups (however one measures size)

some peasants hire-in labour, some hire-out and some do both?". Ashok Rudra comes out with his preferred explanation of this (on peasant differentiation) with the help of the concept of "discontinuities". He argues "that the concept of discontinuities is the direct translation of the Marxian concept of 'qualities into quantities'."

It seems that Ashok Rudra's attempt towards quantification seeks to resolve the complex relationship

42. Ibid, pp.59.
between land and labour as it was raised by Marx in his *Capital* (Volume 1). According to Marx the very essence of class-analysis (of the capitalist society) commences with the examination of the basic question. How do men relate themselves with each other via capital? However, Ashok Rudra tries to present his quantification in the following way. Suppose X is the size of the farm and Y amounts to be ratio between hired - and family-labour in the farm. Then, it could be presented in the following mathematical way.

\[ Y = f(X) \]

It is to be read like this: Y is the function of X. It means that each value of y changes as consequence of the corresponding change in the value of X. To begin with and to put it very simply it means that when the size of land (farm) increase, the amount of hired labour shall also increase. In this formulation the amount of family labour could not be increased if the size of farm (X) exceeds a certain level. For big farms (beyond a certain level) the

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43. Ibid, pp.58.

44. From here onwards follow my own explanation and interpretations as they are considered relevant for the present study.
amount of family labour is likely to take the form of a constant, as it could not be increased any further. In this situation the mathematical equation presented above could well take the form of and might explain the emergence of capitalist relations/ mode of production in agriculture.

The above given equation explains a few other things. The value of $Y$ could vary in both positive as well as negative directions. When one hires-in others' labour the value of $Y$ should be positive and when one hire-out his own labour, it should be negative. And if, to follow Ashok Rudra's formulations $X$ and $X$ are two different values of variable $X$, in such a way as $X > X > X$ then the following three possibilities should be found.

(i) When \( X < X \), $Y$ is positive

(ii) When \( X > X \), $Y$ is negative

(iii) When \( X < X < X \), $Y$ is Zero

There is no question about it, their validity as far as these formulation of Ashok Rudra are concerned. And as he means it the size $X$ shall indicate middle peasant, $X$

shall refer to big peasant and X shall point out small-2 peasant. This is also not being questioned here.

These formulations of Ashok Rudra and also the similar ones by Utsa Patnaik later in the volume are not being questioned here for their inadequate mathematical formulations. These are, on the other hand, very much questionable from sociological point of view.

The entire mode of production debate which emanates from Marxist theory needs to be resolved somewhere on the Indian soil. And as it has been observed above and earlier too that it seems to be a difficult exercise to filter the Marxist theory of class down towards agrarian social structure in India. Paresh Chattopadhyaya has written and taken such a stand that takes us to the extent of the argument suggesting the universal existence of the proletariat as a class. According to this argument the Marxist theory of class happens to be universally valid and individual variations of countries do not matter much. In other words the variation of societies and their level of economic status, therefore be evaluated on the basis of the

46. Paresh Chattopadhyaya, "on question of the Mode of production in Indian Agriculture: A Preliminary Note" in Utsa patnaik (ed.) op.cit. pp.72-83.
Marxist scheme. It contains a lot to take this exercise nearer to the evolutionary method. Marxist scholars particularly need a very cautious approach so that their analysis could not deviate towards evolutionary approach when different societies are attempted to be classified in order to justify their much appreciated theoretical formulations. But as far as sociologists are concerned almost everyone denounced Spencer but has also fallen in the same evolutionary trap. For example sociologists like Emile Durkheim had also fallen into the same trap of evolutionary theories although always tried to move away from it. T.B. Bottomore has however tried to clarify some of the reasons why the scholars were likely to fall into this trap. The simple reason to dissociate ourselves from such sort of an evolutionary trap happens to be that it seems futile at this level of researches in social sciences to attempt to look into the old question of the analogy between biological organism and society.


48. T.B. Bottomore in Sociology: A guide to Problems and Literature has also tried to clarify this point.
However, from sociological point of view the entire mode of production debate needs a re-examination at two levels - (a) that the debate is not lost due to its very nature of formulation, into an evolutionary trap; and (b) that the debate takes a full account of the historical specificity of different societies. For example whether to consider India as a specific, unique case or let it allow to be taken over by mode of production debate which is considerably universal in nature. These points are however insufficient to meet certain other logics pertaining to sociology. These points basically refer to the areas of theoretical formulations and the questions related to the discipline of history. But it was Utsa Patnaik who said that the question of historicity of the Indian situation should be taken into consideration while analysing the mode of production debate. As it has been seen in the earlier chapters that the peasantry of India interacted with various forms and varieties of states during the medieval-and the British-period of history. Free sale and purchase of land was hitherto unknown to Indians before the British colonial rule. Peasantry in the Indian history has always had the state intervention. If the peasant-question has to be understood in a proper historical perspective then, it must be looked into its relationship with state (and state
intervention). This stand brings us to two important questions - (a) how peasantry and state had been related to each other in various periods of the Indian history, and (b) what had been the agrarian social structure of India at different periods of time. These facts are necessary to be known first. The stand that is being taken here is precisely this: it seems necessary to construct the agrarian social structure at various periods of the Indian history and then to try to understand it from the Marxist perspective and formulations. Marxist formulations on "Peasantry as a class" could be attempted, but not before sufficient minimum data have been collected.

As said above, in absence of adequate data and before their precise formulation reflecting the agrarian social structure it would not be possible to begin class-analysis. Apart from these variations in agrarian social structure on the basis of history, there are also reasons, primarily sociological to be taken into consideration. It also seems necessary at this moment to clarify that before examining the methodological problems there is a need to keep in mind that the Marxist theory of class and mode of production debate basically presuppose the macro-level analysis of society. Studies in sociology particularly in India, on the other hand are restricted to micro level examining the structure and processes at the level of a
limited number (it has in general varied between one and six) of villages. It could be argued without much difficulty that how Marxist formulations of peasantry as a class could be filtered down to a single or at the maximum six-villages. Similarly it could also be argued how Weber's notion of class, status and party, be examined in a single village.

Now to deal with such issues mentioned above, it has been tried to formulate "social structure" of the phenomenon that we wish to study. In other words it could be said without any hesitation that structural approach might serve our purpose best, i.e. to construct but first on the basis of data and then attempt, its class-interpretation.

When faced several difficulties (of translating Marxist approach to understand Indian society) like referred above, Utsa Patnaik tried to distinguish between Marx's "Method" and his "Model". Arguing in favour of Marx's method she suggested that his model might be left out which was developed out of his experiences and studies on the west European societies. On a number of occasions Utsa Patnaik (as well as others) when tried to quantify the class-

49. Utsa patnaik, "On Mode of Production in Indian Agriculture: Reply" in her op.cit. (ed.), pp.84.
analysis has taken a position which comes nearer to Weber's or Weber-like argumentation on class-formulation. After a critical appraisal of the mode of production debate in Indian agriculture and peasant class differentiation it would be relevant to carefully examine the sociological contributions also in order to understand the agrarian question more meaningfully.

II

Relevance of Conceptual Formulations in Sociology and Social Anthropology: A Critical Re-examination

A critical examination of the Marxist formulations on the rural and peasant question in India (and also at abroad) brings out one significant point. These Marxist formulations are theoretically sound and logically coherent, but lack the significant amount of data on which they could be tested upon. As it has been argued by the Marxist scholars that class happens to be a matter of theoretical formulations and analytical exercise and therefore not a matter of empirical study. This stand requires a critical

50. For example, please see Ibid, pp.60-61.

51. This position has been accepted by most of the Marxist scholars.
treatment. It is simply difficult to ignore or even overlook, most quoted and widely read, so precisely formulated by Marx. No social order ever disappears before all the productive forces for which there is a room in it have been developed; and new, higher relations of production never appear before the material conditions of their existence have matured in the womb of old society”. Marx continues immediately after this. "Therefore, mankind always sets itself only such problems as it can solve”.

The whole problem at this stage appears to be a methodological one rather than a theoretical one. Marx's own formulations need a much wider outlook i.e. to consider the notion of "empirical" in the widest possible meaning of the term. And to do that it is perhaps necessary to dissociate the term "empirical" from its imaginative relationship with "positivism". In the Marxist formulations it seems possible to conceive of the notion of empirical in its widest possible meaning i.e. referring to facts and processes of a given society, in whatever form available and in whichever


53. Ibid, pp.68.
form understood by the members of the society. The Marxist formulations could not afford to enrich by simply denying to accept the new facts but would rather enrich by accepting them and then attempting certain other unorthodox explanations. With the same standpoint an attempt has been to examine the relevance of various concepts and attempts in sociology and social anthropology to understand the agrarian social structure in India. Very briefly they are "little community", "peasant society", "little and great traditions"; "Universalization" and also "parochialization" "sanskritization"; "dominant caste", "jajmani - system" "folk-urban continuum"; "rural - urban articulations"; "community development programmes"; "class" and also "stratification"; "rural elites"; "power-structure"; "village-studies" and also "green revolution".

It is being argued here that it is possible to look into these concepts and attempts from the point of view of their relevance for the understanding of agrarian social structure and relations in India. These concepts and attempts are taken as data on the rural scene in India. The present attempts accepts and acknowledges Andre Beteille’s

remark that rural sociology and social/cultural anthropology could be considered as closely associated with each other and the Indian situation still confirms it.

Rural sociology in association with social/cultural anthropology has culminated into a series of village-studies beginning with M.N. Srinivas study of a village Rampura in Mysore state, followed by another of Shamirpet village by S.C. Dube. Two edited books on single village studies by different scholars followed them. The first book was edited by McKim Marriot and the second by M.N. Srinivas. Some other significant works conducted during the late nineteen-fifties and sixtees were by F.G. Bailey, Andre Betelle, Alan Beals, B.R. Chauhan


Two other significant studies were by Adrian C. Mayer and T.S. Epstein. Barring a few exceptions each of these single village studies in India has employed the structural-functional method of analysis and the conceptualization of the field material seems to be in line with it. Scholars like M.N. Srinivas and others who had worked with him were influenced by the works of A.R. Radcliffe-Brown. But any critical examination of various concepts employed in these studies precedes the understanding that (structural) functional method has been the guiding approach here. A critical examination of various concepts employed in these village studies has been attempted from the point of view of their relevance for the study of agrarian relations.

To begin with, it was Robert Redfield's conceptualization of the ideal-type of "folk-society"


(opposite of urban society), and his much celebrated "folk-urban continuum" scheme which followed it had been the central issues of rural sociology in the U.S.A. In India A.R. Desai attempted to present the formulations of P.A. Sorokin and C.C. Zimmerman on Rural-Urban Differences.

Robert Redfield's conceptual formulation of "Peasant society" was different from his earlier notion of "Little community". Redfield's notion of peasant society included three characteristics: a) it is a part society with part culture; (b) it is related to the outside (urban) world through elites; and (c) agriculture is taken as a way of life. In the U.S.A. and elsewhere in the world "peasant society" as a concept and village as a phenomenon began to replace anthropologists' earlier concerns with "little community" as a concept and island (or a set of islands) as


a phenomenon. B.R. Chauhan has questioned both of these formulations of Redfield in his study of a village in Rajasthan. He has criticised the "homogeneity" and "self-sufficiency" part of the conceptualization in the context of villages in India. The denial of self sufficiency of villages in India led him to trace rural-urban articulations in a later study conducted about a decade later. Chauhan found it useful to talk of caste-panchayat to the analysis of polity in Rural Rajasthan. The cultural part of village self-sufficiency has been negated by McKim Marriot in his study of a village in Uttar Pradesh. He has not only distinguished between what he calls it "Great - and Litle-Tradition" but also referred to two vital processes namely universalization and parochialization. This seems to be contrast of what Charles Matcalf and F.G. Bailey have said about villages in India.

From the village studies referred to above at least one point is clear (and there is no disagreement

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among scholars on it) that villages do have urban connections. Villages in India might have been studied in isolation but there seems to be a need to get them examined in their contextual relationship with their urban counterpart(s). Marriot's thesis on "Universalization" and "Parochialization" clearly suggests that the rural urban question basically rests upon inequality on the subjugation of villages to the urban areas. The cultural subjugation (of villages) needs a materialistic interpretation. And it seems exactly what Teodar Shanin has formulated, peasantry representing the underdog position. The question of urban dominance requires a fresh and further treatment.

At the level of village M.N. Srinivas has referred to the concept of "sanskritization" and the caste mobility associated with it. Lower-castes and tribes although have attempted to follow the ritual part of higher castes, but this cultural subjugation requires the explanation of their structural placement in the agrarian hierarchy. Similarly the concept of "dominant caste" also requires to be examined from the agrarian point of view. In short there seems to be

a possibility to initiate the caste class dialogue. Without class being examined the caste structure of Indian villages appears to be incomplete. It seems therefore necessary to look into the agrarian hierarchy of villages in different parts of India. Agrarian hierarchy would in turn help in constructing the agrarian social structure. Class-analysis of agrarian social structure then becomes an important question.

Land and tenancy reforms have been the subject matter of the state (provincial) government. It would therefore be worthwhile to analyse and construct agrarian social structure state (province) wise where some studies have been conducted. Although analysed statewise, these data could lead towards the construction of agrarian social structure in India since independence from which individual variations might be explained.

The construction of agrarian social structure at the national level has been attempted mainly by two scholars. Daniel Thorner has referred to three categories, namely: (1) malik (proprietor); (2) Kisan (working peasant); (3) sharecropper.

and mazdur (agricultural labourers). According to Daniel Thorner these three "classes" represent the agrarian social structure in India. This study was conducted in the discipline referred as "economic history", but it has its importance from our point of view because it includes some empirical observations. Moreover the references to these three "classes" have been conveyed in the local terminology. Broadly speaking these three categories represent agrarian social structure in India, but there are a few difficulties in accepting these formulations. The first difficulty arises at the empirical level. Here it seems that Daniel Thorner has not given any importance to yet another important category of sharecroppers in this classification whereas sharecroppers do constitute an important social category, since it is likely to play a crucial role when any class analysis is attempted. The second difficulty with Throner's formulation comes up at the conceptual level. These three units could at best be called as categories rather than "classes". Before any categorization of agrarian population it seems necessary to examine the complexities between two variables - landownership and work. If these variables are cross tabulated against each other there come up at least four categories - (1) people who own land but do not work on it (2) people who own land and work on it,(3) people who do not own land but work on others land as share croppers and
(4) people who do not own any land but work as agricultural labourers.

Before any class analysis is attempted, it seems possible to put a few hypotheses. First when agrarian relations are based largely on the categories (1) and (4), sharp contradictions are likely to emerge. Second when agrarian relations are based upon the relationship between categories (1) and (3) then, even exploitation might be present but contradiction is not likely to appear at surface and sharecropping might give stability to the existing relation. However the process of slower changes could not be ruled out. Third, if the agrarian populations is composed largely of category (2)) then it might lead towards the stability of the existing structure in which class-conflict might just not be possible. To shift from the analysis of the local categories to sociological categories, agrarian social structure in India could be said to include the following:

(1) asentee landowner
(2) peasant proprietor
(3) sharecropper and
(4) agricultural labourer

According to Andre Beteille, the top of the
agrarian hierarchy before independence composed of Zamindars, taluqdras and jagirdars. In the southern part of India, particularly in the Madras Presidency agrarian inequalities and contradictions were present during the British rule. In other words, as it has been argued in the previous chapter also, that not only zamindari system of land tenure but also the ryotwari system too led towards the creation of agrarian inequalities, contradictions and class-relations. Here an attempt has been made to identify various categories which compose agrarian social structure.

With the national independence the most significant change that was brought about was the abolition of the zamindari system. This included the abolition of taluqdras and jagirdars also from the northern part of India. Yogendra Singh has identified this change as a significant one. According to him with the abolition of zamindari system the nucleus of old power structure was broken. Andre Beteille has also referred to the decline of Zamindars in West Bengal. It includes the breakup of larger estates and the reduction of smaller ones upto the size of a larger owner cultivator. Beteille's analysis of the eastern

77. Andre Beteille, op.cit. 1974, pp.78.
part of Bengal, now known as Bangladesh confirms our earlier position. It has been argued earlier that agrarian inequalities could get reflected in some other forms, most likely in primordial ties. And also our earlier stand gets confirmed that any primordial conflict specially in rural areas should not be seen and analysed at its face value, but there is a need to look into the deeper insights. Andre Béteille puts the agrarian contradictions and changes in the eastern part of Bengal as "radical". The big Zamindars were Hindus and after partition of the country, their land was taken over by the government. There is a need to look into various questions of some other primordial contradictions in rural area, particularly caste-conflicts from the agrarian point of view.

While analysing the agrarian social structure of West Bengal, Andre Beteille has drawn attention towards a significant point. The categories to which references have been made happen to be legal categories. It could be argued therefore that to what extent these legally defined categories reflect the social categories in which sociologists are interested. Andre Beteille has also commented that so far no effort has been made to arrive at

78. Ibid, pp.78.
these sociological categories. The legal categories from our point of view become significant if they were located de facto or found empirically present.

Andre Beteille's simplest division of agrarian inequalities in West Bengal includes two categories namely (1) jamindars and (2) Krishaks. His another division includes the six categories which are close to the "class" definitions of term. These six categories of agrarian social structure are - (1) jamindar (2) taluqdar, (3) jotedar (4) adhiyar, (5) mahindar and (6) munish. He correctly argues in favour of a dialogue between these "class" like categories and the primordial ones. It is quite possible that it might lead towards a better understanding of the complexities of caste - system. But perhaps the most significant contribution of Beteille is his attempt to identify and locate the possible relationship between the categories of agrarian social structure and the primordial ones. Andre Beteille has attempted to relate the agrarian categories with primordial ones like this (1) jamindar (Hindu), (2) jotedar (Muslim), (3) bargadars (Harijan) and

80. Ibid, pp.137
81. Ibid, pp.180
82. Ibid.
(4) Khet majurs (Adibasi). However some exceptions to this could not be ruled out. Although this classification could be criticised, but its merit lies in the attempt which he has made towards what we may call it "macro sociology".

Andre Beteille on the other hand, has also pointed out the significance of empirical studies. In other words Beteille has also tried to look into the area of "micro-sociology". The most significant perhaps happens to be regarding the term "jotedar". Although generally speaking "jotedar" means owner-cultivator but in some parts of West Bengal it also means sharecroppers. In Darjeeling, Dinajpur, and Jalpaiguri the term jotedar means tenant in chief, and during the British rule it came next to the zamindar in agrarian hierarchy. But in certain other districts of West Bengal like Burdwan, Birbhum and Bankura "jotedar" means a sharecropper. What is the most important point which emerges out of it is perhaps that while attempting to generalise at macro level, the micro level empirical realities need not be overlooked. The only answer to this sort of empirical and microlevel challenges shall perhaps be to conduct as many studies as possible at the micro level.

The data generated there would be used later for macrolevel generalizations.

Yet another point which need mention is Beteille's categorization of peasantry into various (socio-economic) types. Andre Beteille has mentioned a set of terminology like, (1) dhani chashi (big peasants), (2) majhari chashi (middle peasants), and (3) garib chashi (poor peasants). This categorization of the peasantry look more nearer to the one referred by Mao-Tse Tung. For Mao Tse Tung, it could be argued that he mobilised the poor and middle peasants against the big ones. The demographic distribution of the Chinese population could have suited Mao's strategy. But Andre Beteille's classification of peasantry into rich middle and poor peasants is quite different from one which has been attempted recently by some Marxist scholars, particularly Utsa Patnaik. Utsa Patnaik uses mainly one criteria to identify the nature and extent of exploitation and i.e. the ratio between the number of days of work by family labour and that of the hired labour. If means that at big farms the higher amount of hired about leads towards

84. Ibid, pp.123.
more exploitation and when one does not sell out one's labour the exploitation happens to be minimum. There seems a need to do some more empirical studies along the model suggested by Utsa Patnaik. But the most difficult part of it could perhaps be to relate the data with the Marxist theory.

As it has been pointed out earlier that the agrarian and land reforms have been the subject matter of state (provincial) governments. At this stage it would be relevant to mention about the agrarian social structure of a few other states. M.N. Srinivas while writing about Malabar has referred to jenmis who were non-cultivating owners generally from Nambudri Brahmin caste, Kanam who were non-cultivating lessees of land for twelve years are generally drawn from higher caste Nayar. The rest of the population comprising of lower castes like ceruman, pulayan and panam tribe constitute the category of agricultural labourers.

Andre Beteille has referred to the changes in agrarian social structure in Tanjore, Tamil Nadu. Referring to the anti-Brahmin movement Andre Beteille says that


87. For details please see Andre Beteille's earlier work Caste, Class and Power: Changing Patterns of Stratification in A Tanjore village.

Brahmins have lost power completely to the non Brahmins. The agrarian social structure included three categories namely (1) mirasdars (2)Kuttahaidars and (3) pannaiyals. Andre Beteille has refered to the interdependence of these three categories over one another but also referred to the instances of conflict among them.

In Uttar Pradesh the agrarian hierarchy consisted like this - (1) bhumidhars, (2) sirdars and (3) asamis. According to Daniel Thorner the agrarian hierarchy was like that - (1) Khudkasht, (2) sirdar (3) asami and (4) adhivasi. The last category says Thorner that it has disappeared in the due course of time. We shall have the occasion to return to the details of agrarian social structure in Uttar Pradesh in the following chapter.

Daniel Thorner has referred to the change in agrarian social structure of Rajasthan. Being a princely state the Rajput jagirdars had dominated over Jat peasantry. After the abolition of jagidari in 1952, many Rajputs kept certain minimum land for self cultivation. National independence and the abolition of Zamindari system of land

89. Ibid, pp.66
tenure has brought some significant change in the agrarian social structure in India. The old power structure has paved the way for newer one in which the oppressed peasantry (and castes also) have now started to assert their presence. The entire loss of power by the Zamindars, jagirdars, and taluqdar has left the place to be occupied by next lower section. The rise of non Brahmins in Tamil Nadu, of agricultural castes like Kamma and Reddy in Andhra Pradesh, of Jats and Yadavas in Uttar Pradesh are some instances suggesting that a new power structure is likely to emerge. With the rise of middle castes there is a possibility for the middle class to rise in rural India.

The whole argument given so far could be summed up like this. The mode of production debate in Indian agriculture mainly attempts to examine nature and extent of the development of capitalism and this analysis takes exploitation into consideration. From sociological point of view however capitalism could be seen as a part of social reality and as a force that is capable enough to transform social relations. The more important question could be like: Who are the wage earners and what are their existential conditions? What is the social background of these wage earners? Has it something to do with the primordial or particularly caste-structure or society? How is surplus
created by landlords and how is it spent? Whether surplus is invested in agriculture, in industry or somewhere else? The whole question of wage earning, existential conditions of wage earned, surplus-value and its re- or non-investment, unemployment, migration to urban areas, green revolution and development of co-operatives are the questions in which we are interested. Not the phenomenon of capitalism in itself but the sort of social relations emerging out of it would be our concern. Similarly our concern would be to look beyond the economic explanation of classes involved in the capitalist mode of production. The class structure of Society could be related to the prevailing traditional social structure. The role of politics could also be examined in this context. After examining each category carefully the agrarian class structure of India could be constructed like the following.

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