CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION
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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. NATURE AND SUBJECT OF THE INQUIRY

The present study makes an attempt to analyse the peasant movement in Tamilnadu. Tamilnadu State has been traditionally known for peaceful co-existence of various caste, religious, class and occupational groups. Agriculture has been the traditional primary occupation of the peasantry. During times of monsoon and adoption of traditional methods in cultivation, the self-sustaining agricultural character was very much revealed. The village society was characterised by physical isolation, segregation and cut off from the wider world. This geographical character influenced very much the villagers in formation of their social structure. In view of these structural features the village people were known for the We feeling, social cohesion, community sentiment, homogeneity, etc. All these social structural features reflected in preservation of unity, integrity and peaceful co-existence.

The socio-economic institution of jajmani system in villages further accelerated the village people's social bond and developed concern for mutual welfare and co-operation in the minds of the village people. In view of the prevalence of all these things in villages
the people remained unorganised. Even during the British period, although, the colonial rulers undertook certain measures affecting peasantry, the peasants protest by and large remained unarticulated. Yet their agitations against the rulers and other local exploiters were spasmodic besides being sporadic and spontaneous. These struggles were essentially launched against feudal estates and imperialists.

During the early twentieth century, the agrarian classes were mobilised politically for the national movement. The peasantry hoped that the culmination of British rule would pave the way for their prosperity and solve their problems. As against these expectations the dawn of independence effected change in agrarian structure, owing to imbalanced development, technological transformation in agriculture created restlessness amongst the landed and landless peasantry. For the first time, in India, a big divide has taken place amongst agriculturists since introduction of programmes of agricultural modernisation. The problems of landed peasantry were conscientised by the leaders which paved the way for their organisation. Moreover, the problems felt by the landed peasantry, especially in Tamilnadu were not taken into consideration by any political party and this warranted some important and knowledgeable people of farming community to spearhead and, organise the peasants into Agriculturists Association. These Associations (Thamizhaga Vivasayigal Sangam,
Tamilnadu State Agriculturists' Association, etc.) preferred to remain non-political so as to mobilise peasantry irrespective of socio-economic, political & religious background. These non-political peasant organisations did attract mass support base in rural areas in view of the burning issues highlighted through them. The Associations were able to preserve unity, integrity, perseverance, we feeling, community sentiment, oneness etc., and thereby preserved vertical unity and horizontal solidarity. These Associations staged regular protests and demonstrations to highlight their grievances and resorted to such pressure tactics as rally, conference, picketing, fast, no-tax compaign, etc.

By experience, certain non-political peasant organisations particularly Thamizhaga Vivasayigal Sangam (Tamilnadu Agriculturists' Association) understood the weakness of being non-political owing to inability to bear repression at the hands of rulers decided to convert the non-political organisation into a political party of peasantry in the name of Indian Farmers and Toilers Party (IFTP) with a view to seek support from other like minded political parties as well to contest in elections to capture some seats in Parliament, Assembly and Local Bodies to effectively pursue pressure course of action for getting fair deal from the Government and others.
The present research work is undertaken against this background of circumstances leading to emergence of peasant organisations in Tamilnadu, issues highlighted, pressure courses of action pursued, organisational strength and weakness of being non-political and political party organisation of peasantry interface with certain political developments at the governmental level in Tamilnadu.

1.2. SURVEY OF LITERATURE

The problems of peasantry were not dealt seriously by scholars till recently except some historical studies by Marxist scientists and others. But their attempts were scattered and concentrated on specific movements particularly during British period and later. There are certain studies by some western social scientists on the revolutionary character of the peasant movements in various countries. For instance, scholars like Eric Wolf, Haraza Alavi, and Kathleen Gough have agreed on the revolutionary character of the peasants but there is disagreement among them on which section - rich, middle, poor - of the peasants led the peasant revolutions in various countries. Eric Wolf and Hamza Alavi formulated the middle peasant thesis identifying the middle peasant as the real social base of revolution in countries like Russia, China, Mexico, Vietnam, Algeria and Cuba. But in India, Kathleen Gough stated that poor peasants are revolutionary, whereas Barrington Moore
declared that in India peasant rebellions were relatively rare, completely ineffective. He attributed this alleged weakness to the peculiarities of the India's social structure particularly, the caste system as well as to the apparent docility of the Indian peasants. Dhanagare agreed that in India, agricultural labourers and poor peasants be relied upon to support the revolution. Sunilsen stressed the need for alliance between peasants and workers as a precondition for a successful revolution, and attributed the failure of the three major communist led uprisings in India to the lack of support by the workers.

Neil Charlesworth has applied the middle peasant thesis in his study about the Bardoli Satyagraha movement and stated that the middle peasant relationship to peasant political action is that of chicken or egg. David Hardiman suggested that in India during the nineteenth century, the rising classes of rich capitalist peasants had consolidated their power largely at the expense of the peasantry. He referred to a rising class of dominant peasantry.

Oommen has argued that middle peasant thesis cannot be sustained neither on logical nor on empirical grounds and pointed out that many of the agrarian movements in India were caste, communal in nature. After examining the peasant movements during 1970s and 1980s in India Rudolph and Rudolph have stressed that
bullock capitalists were dominant in the movements. They operate family farms as family firms and produce enough for the market. Further, they argued that the pursuit of the market advantage and profits can involve the interests of all agricultural producers and owner cultivators, tenants and agricultural workers in the peasant movements. Their collective interests are affected by advantageous terms of trade with industrial producers, in the modern movements the peasants are fighting for common demands - the most important being the demand for remunerative prices for their produce.  

There are some studies on peasant movement, looking at them with historical perspective. They provide a detailed account of the peasant uprisings over the years in many parts of India. Some other works are dealing with economic aspects of the agrarian unrest that find fault with Green Revolution that created an economic disparity among the peasantry. A few studies are available on agrarian unrest with sociological perspective.

There are a few studies on peasant movements in Tamilnadu conducted in Tanjore district which is the granery of Tamilnadu, Kathleen Gough's Rural Society in South East India is concerned with rural struggles, exploitation and poverty in two villages in Tanjore district. In another study, she has analysed the peasant revolts in two states, Kerala and Tamilnadu. Her third study challenges those
scholars who underestimate the scope and significance of Indian Peasant uprising. She has pointed out 77 revolts as peasant uprisings during the British rule. Marshall Bouton brings out two phases of rural militancy in 1944-1952 and then in 1968-1972 in Tanjore district.

There are some articles on Tanjore district which exposed the conditions of tenants and landless labourers and their agitation against the land owners. But the problems of land owning peasants and their efforts to organise themselves have not received much attention among the scholars and researchers. However, some articles are available that trace the development of the movement in Tamilnadu since independence.

Barbara Harriss described the activities of Tamilnadu agriculturists' Association in Tiruppur cotton market in Coimbatore district. Balasubramaniam's article narrated the circumstances leading to the formation of Indian Farmers and Toilers Party by Tamizhaga Vivasayigal Sangam. The various activities and programmes of the farmers Association in the 70s draw the attention of some correspondents and editors of some journals and newspapers. But the available information is meagre.

As regards peasant organisations, only a few studies are available that have not included the land owning peasant organisations.
Rasul's work deals with the history of All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) since its formation. Seth's \(^1\) work described the nature of peasant organisation in different states by AIKS. Alexander\(^2\) described in his book Peasant Organisations in South India about the development of peasant organisations and their activities in Tamilnadu, Karnataka and Kerala.

The journals, conference souvenirs, annuals and special publications of Agriculturists' Association in Tamilnadu explain the nature and structure of their movement in a scattered manner.

1.3. THE CONCEPT OF PEASANT

Considered broadly the term peasant means both the non-working land owners and the landless agricultural labourers and applied to mean whoever engaged in agricultural operations of all kinds such as land owners, tenants and share croppers and agricultural landless labourers. The scholars widely differ in identifying the peasants properly.

The concept of peasant has been treated in the literature as homogeneous and heterogeneous categories with respect to class. The discussion on the class characteristics of peasantry started during the preceding century between the Marxian and non-Marxian scholars.
While one set of scholars argue that peasants should be treated as a homogeneous category, the other made a scathing attack on the misconception in treating peasants as homogeneous category and tried to identify the potentialities of peasantry in terms of heterogeneous class characteristics.

Before the emergence of Kroeber the literature on peasant was very scanty and no attempt was made to define it. The first systematic attempt to define the concept of peasant came from Kroeber (1948) who tried to throw some light on the concept of peasant in a systematic manner treating it as a homogeneous category. Accordingly, he claims Peasants constitute part societies with part cultures. They are definitely rural yet live in relation to market towns. They form a class segment of a larger population. They lack isolation, the political economy, the self-sufficiency of tribal population, but their local units retain much of their old identity, integration and attachment to soil and cults. It was alleged that Kroeber was thinking of the European peasantry while he conceived the characteristic features of peasants.

Later Firth (1950) found the term peasant primarily an economic referent and observed that the primary means of livelihood is cultivation of the soil. He also identified similar characteristics with other small scale producers such as fishermen, craftsmen and
included in his conception and claimed they are the same social class as the agriculturists often members of the same families. The critics of these conceptions posed of what larger society, with what more complex culture are peasants a part?

Redfield (1953) answered these questions. He clarified the word Peasant points to a human type ... It required the city to bring it into existence. There were no peasants before the first cities and those surviving primitive people who do not live in terms of the society are not peasants. To him, larger society of which peasants are part is urban society. He also talked of Great and little Tradition for distinguishing the urban culture with peasant culture.

Chayanov (1960) tried to look at it in great detail. In Chaynov's view, peasant motivations are different from those of the capitalist, they aim at securing for the needs of the family rather than to make profit. Chayanov discussed Peasants based upon his model of pure family farm. On the family farm, Chayanov claims that the family is equipped with means of production; uses its labour power to cultivate the soil and receives as the result of a year's work a certain amount of goods. Chayanov's views were subjected to scathing attack by scholars like Harrison. According to Harrison, it was wrong to assume that peasant households never employed wage labour.
Much closer to Chayanov, Teodor Shanin (1966) takes more or less a similar stand on peasant family farm. In his view, peasantry consist of small agricultural producers who with the help of simple equipment and labour of their families produce mainly for their own consumption and for the fulfilment of obligations to the holders of political and economic power. The produce from the farm meets the basic consumption needs of the peasant family and gives the peasant relative independence from other producers and for the market. He claims family farm is the basic unit of peasant ownership, consumption and social life. At the time of crisis the peasant households are able to maintain their existence by increasing their effort and reducing their consumption. The glaring difference between Chayanov and Shanin is that Chayanov's peasants do not have surplus to fulfil their obligation to the holders of economic and political power. A significant advancement over these conception on the characteristic features of peasantry came from Marx when he talked of the potentialities of the class of peasantry.

Marx (1920) talks of the peasantry as the small holding peasants form a vast mass, the members of which live in similar condition without entering into manifold relations with one another. Their mode of production isolates them from one another instead of bringing them into mutual intercourse. Their isolation is increased due to bad communication, the small holding admits no division of
labour in its cultivation, no application of science and therefore no diversity of development, no variety of talent and no wealth of social relationships. Each individual peasant family is almost self-sufficient in itself directly produces the major part for its consumption and thus acquires its means of life more through exchange with nature than in intercourse with society. Marx claimed that as far as the peasant families who live under similar economic conditions of existence that separate their mode of life, their interests, their culture from those of the other classes and when there is merely a local interconnection among these small holding peasant and the identity of their interests begets no community, no national bond and no political organisation among them, they do not form a class. They are subsequently incapable of enforcing their class interest in their name whether through a Parliament or through a convention. They can't represent they must be represented, sack of potatoes in a sack form a sack of potatoes, idiotic class, representing barbarism in the midst of civilisation.

The contributions of various scholars on the characteristic features of peasantry highlighted above reveal the homogeneous characteristics of peasantry. They expressed these views when European peasantry shared or possessed those characteristics. The Anthropologists in general, kept the European peasantry in their mind
while they expressed their views on peasantry. Chayanov and Marx kept the Russian and French peasantry respectively while they talked of peasantry as a class. They never tried to differentiate the classes within the peasantry. The first systematic attempt to differentiate the classes of peasantry came from Lenin, who recognised for the first time in great detail regarding the heterogeneous class characteristics of peasantry.

Lenin (1920) talks of six different agrarian classes in terms of ownership of means of production and labour exploitation. Those are agricultural proletariat, semi proletariat, small peasantry, middle peasantry, big peasants and big land owners. To Lenin, agriculture proletariat are wage labourers who obtain their livelihood by working for hire in capitalist agricultural enterprises. The semi proletariats or dwarf peasants are those who obtain their livelihood partly as wage labourers in agricultural and industrial capitalist enterprises and partly by working on their owner rented plots of land which provide only a part of the means of subsistence for their families. According to him, the small peasantry, that is small tillers who hold either as owners or as tenants, small plots of land which enable them to meet the requirements of their families and their farm without hiring outside labour. The middle peasants are those small farmers who either as owners or tenants hold plots of land that are also small but are sufficient under capitalism. The farm not only provides a mere
subsistence for their family and the bare minimum needed to maintain
the farm but also provides certain surplus in good years for
investment. The big peasants, according to him, are capitalist
entrepreneurs in agriculture who employ several hired labourers and
are connected with the peasantry only by their low cultural level
habits of life and the manual labour they themselves perform on
their farms. The big land owners who directly or through their
tenant farmers systematically exploit wage labour and the small i
peasantry. They perform no manual labour. Lenin describes these
category of people as exploiters and parasites. Obviously, Lenin's
characterisation of peasantry was a distinct advancement over Marx in
as much as he identified several classes within the peasantry.
Another marked feature is that he did not consider peasants as sack
of potatoes but in the Russian context clearly recognised that success
of revolution would depend upon the working class entering into close
alliance with the peasantry and involving them in class struggle in
the revolutionary process.

Mao (1933) differentiated the peasantry in terms of ownership
of means of production and exploitation on the basis of wage, labour,
 usury, rent and market forces. He talks of the five different
agrarian classes in his selected works. Those are landlords, rich
peasants, middle peasants, poor peasants and workers. Mao's
characterisation of peasants into various classes was not only
undertaken by him from the point of view of economic class but more so to distinguish the real antagonism that subserves between exploiters and the exploited. This also provided to him a political basis of conducting a Chinese revolution in which he recognised two roles of peasants providing revolutionary leadership along with the workers. In this respect his contribution is singular and raised the status of peasants from sack of potatoes to a revolutionary class.

Lenin and Mao's conception on peasant differentiation in terms of means of production and exploitation served for theoretical formulation to identify various classes within the peasantry. Several scholars (Barrington Moore, Eric Wolf, Landsberger, Patnaik) used this model for their theoretical starting point to identify the classes within the peasantry. It was also used at the empirical level to distinguish the agrarian classes in various countries.

Barrington Moore (1977) tried to look at the class of peasantry in terms of superordination and subordination. In his view, a previous history of subordination to a landed upper class recognised and enforced in the laws . . . sharp cultural distinctions and a considerable degree of defacto possession of land constitute the main distinguishing features of peasantry. These distinctions are blurred at the edges. According to him, landless are not peasants. This initiated the debate amongst peasant scholars whether the landless labourers are within the definition of peasant or they fall outside.
Eric Wolf tried to concretise the ingredients to identify the classes of peasantry within peasantry. According to him, Peasants are subordinate, ruled, exploited class and their surplus is being appropriated through rent, usury and market forces. Nevertheless, Eric Wolf's approach is inconsistent in the sense that he frequently changed his notion from one period to another. In his book entitled Type of Latin American Peasantry he says that land is a critical variable for understanding the peasantry. After sometime, he completely changed his notion and said control of means of production including the disposition of human labour passes from the hands of primary producers into the hands of group that do not carry on the productive process themselves. It is not the loss of ownership of land which is the critical variable. He says, as long as a peasant is part of simple primitive society and not in contact with modern forces until then ownership is a critical variable; when there is transaction from simple to complex then land passes on from the so called subordinate class to superordinate class. Gradually peasant becomes landless due to technological transformation, market forces etc. In this sense, he is much closer to Moore.

Later, in another book entitled Peasant he remarked: peasants are rural cultivators whose surpluses are transferred to a dominant group of rulers. He also introduced in this work the concept of exploitation to differentiate peasantry. In another work entitled
Peasant Wars in Twentieth Century, Eric Wolf defined peasants as population that are essentially involved in cultivation and make autonomous decisions regarding the process of cultivation. His emphasis now in on 'autonomous decisions' to differentiate the class of peasantry.

A breakthrough in the conception of peasantry came from Landsberger when he tried to look at it in terms of socio-economic and political dimensions. He remarked there is a landed upper class which recognised legally and all the classes below it are subordinate socially, economically and politically. According to him, the class of peasantry is a subordinate class and occupy lower position in all the three dimensions.

The preceding analysis on the concept of peasantry as perceived by different scholars reveal the existence of different categories of peasants. It also substantiated various parameters to identify the class of peasantry. In summary, the peasants are subordinate to a superordinating class, exploited through wage labour, their surplus is appropriated in the form of rent, usury, market forces, etc., and occupy lowest position in social, economic and political dimensions. Accordingly, for the purpose of this study peasants are treated as those who own land and directly engaged in farming activities, cultivating tenants, sharecroppers and also landless
agricultural labourers who provide effective support in the process of agricultural production.

1.4. THE CONCEPT OF PEASANT IN INDIAN CONTEXT

Since agriculture is the way of life and about 80 per cent of the population in India depend upon agriculture for their livelihood, it is essential to understand the class of peasantry in the Indian context keeping in view the conceptions advanced by various scholars on peasantry, its suitability and its applicability.

Using Indian vernacular terms Daniel Thorner (1956) analysed the agrarian classes in India. He has exhaustively studied the nature of Indian agriculture and used the following three criteria to differentiate the agrarian classes.

I. Type of **Income** obtained from the soil
   1. Rent
   2. Fruits of own cultivation
   3. Wages

II. The **Nature of rights**
   1. Proprietary or ownership
   2. Tenancy
3. Sharecropping right
4. No right at all

III. The extent of field work actually performed
1. Absentee, who does not work at all
2. Those who perform partial work
3. Total work done by the actual cultivator with his family labour.
4. Where work is done entirely for others to earn wages.

On the basis of these criteria, he had identified the existence of three principal categories of agrarian classes in India. Those are in Indian vernacular terms; (i) Maliks; (ii) Kisans; and (iii) Mazdoors.

Among the Maliks, he had identified two subcategories namely big land lords and rich peasants. Similarly, among the Kisans, he had identified two other sub-categories. Those are small landowners and substantial tenants. Finally, among the Mazdoors, he had identified three sub-categories of peasants. Those are poor peasants, sharecroppers and landless labourers.

To Thorner, the Maliks derived income primarily from property rights in soil and whose common interest is to keep the
level of rent up while keeping the wage level down. They collect rents from sub-renters and sharecroppers. The Big landlords, the first sub-category of Maliks are absentee landowners with absolutely no interest in land management or its improvement. The second sub-category of Maliks are rich landowners who are proprietors with considerable holdings but usually in the same village and although they perform no fieldwork, they do supervise cultivation and take personal interest in the management. Kisans are working peasants having property rights in the land but their actual rights, whether legal or customary are inferior to those of Maliks. The first sub-category among Maliks are small landowners who cultivate land with labour and who do not either employ outside labour (except in harvest) or receive rent. The second sub-category is substantial tenants, the tenurial rights are fairly secure, size of holding usually above the sufficiency level. The Mazdoors are earning their livelihood primarily from working on others plots. The first sub-category is poor peasants who are having tenancy rights but less secure, holdings too small to suffice a family's maintenance and income derived from land comes often less than what one may earn by wage labour. The second sub-category among the Mazdoors is sharecroppers and tenants at will, leases with less security, cultivate land for others on sharecrop basis and have some agricultural implements. The final sub-category is the landless labourers, who hire themselves out for wage for their subsistence.
Dhanagare (1976) points out that Daniel Thorner's three major categories designed by the current Indian vernacular terms are based on the relations of production or in relation to means of production and in this sense represent strictly a Marxian model of agrarian classes. Thorner's sub-categories are nearer the realities of the Indian agrarian social structure. His approach more or less resembles with the Marxian approach to the analysis of agrarian classes. The following equation substantiates this statement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marxian Class</th>
<th>Thorner's Class Categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Land lord</td>
<td>Big landlords</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Rich peasants</td>
<td>Rich peasants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Middle peasants</td>
<td>Small landowners and substantial tenants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Poor peasants</td>
<td>Poor peasants and sharecroppers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Landless labourers</td>
<td>Landless labourers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dhanagare in his categorisation classified peasants on the pattern of Daniel Thorner with slight modification. Those categories are landlords, rich peasants, middle peasants, poor peasants and landless labour. Scholars like Washbrook questioned the validity of classifying peasants on the basis eco-criterion as there is vast difference in land use, productivity etc., of the different eco categories.
Utsa Patnaik (1976) had questioned the incorrect neo-classical and neo-populist way of classifying the peasantry since Indian agriculture is characterised by high degree of concentration of both land and non-land resources with a minority of cultivators while the majority have command over disproportionately low share of resources. This being the case in Indian agriculture, she claims, the Marxist theory of class differentiation within the peasantry provides the necessary analytical tools to differentiate the classes of peasantry at the empirical level. Due to this, she had rejected the faulty methods of classifying peasantry on the basis of the extent of leasing in and out, physical acre criterion etc.

To elaborate further, Utsa Patnaik set aside the very commonly used single index, size of holding, to identify the class status. Because an acre of irrigated or high fertility land is obviously different from an acre of rainfed or barren land. Rejecting all these faulty method of differentiating peasantry, she suggests her own criterion termed as labour exploitation criterion in terms of the use of outside labour relative to the use of family labour for categorising the classes of peasantry which, according to her, serves as the most reliable single index.

Utsa Patnaik claimed, for a cultivator there can be two types of use of outside labour in production that is: (i) direct hiring of
others labour; (ii) indirect appropriation of others labour through leasing out land for rent. Conversely there are the same two other ways in which his labour may be appropriated by others.

1. Direct hiring out of family labour,
2. Indirect, through payment of rent for land leased in.

If the direct hiring of others' labour component predominates in relation to the family labour then the household is characterised as capitalist and the indirect appropriation of others labour predominates (in relation to the family labour) then the household is termed as landlord. Similarly, direct hiring out of family labour for wage demonstrates the landless agricultural labour household and indirect hiring out indicates tenants, poor peasant households. She says for the middle category of primarily self employed cultivators the hired in days will be relatively less or zero. That is, either these cultivators will not be involved in exploitation at all or they will be involved in a very minor extent.

Using E (Exploitation) criterion, Utsa Patnaik has classified the Indian peasantry into five principal categories. Those are the following. The first category contains both big landowners, feudal types and capitalists distinguished from the peasants by the fact that the family members do not perform manual labour in any major farm
operations. Their resource position per capita is also favourable for appropriating others' labour whether directly or indirectly. The middle peasants are subsistence farmers and self-employed. She had also identified two sub-categories under this category on the basis of the extent of exploitation of others' labour and self-exploitation. Accordingly, she designates the former as upper middle peasant and the latter as lower middle peasant. Poor peasants, according to her, basically either landless or petty tenants. The typical poor peasants cannot make ends meet and have to depress consumption standards below customary level. Finally, she characterises the full time labourers as those who entirely or mainly depend on hiring out their labour for wages in order to obtain a subsistence.

No less a conception was subjected to severe criticism than that of Utsa Patnaik's E criterion. Several scholars (Teodor Shanin, Staffan Lindberg, Dalip S. Swamy, Asok Rudra, Gopal Iyer) applied her criterion and found its limitations in application at empirical level.

Shiva Kumar (1978) differentiates the classes of peasantry in his study conducted in two villages in Chengelpet district of Tamil Nadu, in terms of two criteria that is ownership or non-ownership of means of production and the type of use of means of production are put to. Among these two, he took land as the critical variable to differentiate the classes of peasantry. Based upon these indicators, he discussed five classes of peasantry. Those are the following:
1. The Big Peasants are those who own 10 acres of land each and cultivate with the help of hired labour and also lease out some of their land.

2. The Medium Peasants are those who rely on hired labour for cultivation, but who work on only 5-10 acres of land and own even less. Another feature of medium peasants is that their investible surplus or resources are much less than those of the big peasants. The petty peasants, who own land between 2 and 5 acres, mainly rely on household labour for cultivation. The landless peasants are most numerous and self explanatory as far as the land holding is concerned. The final category is landlords, who own but do not cultivate land. The landlords combine non-agricultural earning with their lease income, although their lease incomes constitute a major part of their earning.

The contribution of various scholars on the concept of peasant and class differentiation thereon makes clear the existence of heterogeneous agrarian class composition in Indian agriculture. This being the situation in India, it discards the notion on peasantry as homogeneous class category.

So far as this study of peasant politics is concerned, the peasants are treated in terms of marginal farmers (who own less than
2.50 acres of well irrigated land) small farmers (2.5 to 5.00 acres of well irrigated land) middle farmers (5.00 to 10.00 acres of well irrigated land) Big farmers (10.00 acres and above of well irrigated land) based upon the empirical reality in the study area. In the case of irrigated land the extent would be 50 per cent of the well irrigated land as quoted above. The landless agricultural labourers are included because of the support structure they provide for agriculture and its prosperity. They are also affected due to policy and developments in agriculture. This classification is helpful to identify the type of peasants, marginal, small, medium, big and landless agricultural labour in the two eco types (Eco I predominantly irrigated by single source that is well, Eco II multiple irrigation sources like canal, well, tank, rainfed) selected for the present study. Their participation involving which type (eco), what kind (peasant), at what level (peasant participation) is analysed for drawing inference relating to mass base, strength, pressure course of action, militancy, support, benefit derived, etc.

1.5. POLITICAL CLASS CHARACTERISTICS OF PEASANTRY

The organisation and political movements of the exploited peasantry started its course of militant action right from the 19th century. But these movements were, by and large, unorganised, scattered and focussed only on the local problems. The political
movements of the oppressed peasantry vehemently adopted pressure tactics in its movements since independence. The Governmental programmes of agricultural modernization further aggravated the deteriorating condition of peasantry particularly in Tamilnadu. The affected peasantry were forced to intensify their agitation through conversion of their organisation either as an affiliate of a political party or by making the same organisation as a political party.

Among the modern peasant movements in the country, besides Indian Farmers and Toilers Party conceived, formed and spearheaded by Late Narayanaswami Naidu, mention must be made here the Shetkari Sanghatan of Sharad Joshi in Maharashtra, Bharatiya Kisan Union led by Mahendra Singh, Tikaith in Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka Rajya Ryothu Sangha (Karnataka State Agriculturists' Association) led by Prof. Nanchundaswami in Karnataka. All these political and non-political organisations of peasantry in India pursued the issues of peasantry. Besides these peasant organisations in India almost all National and Regional level political parties like Indian National Congress, Janatha Dal, Communist Party of India (Marxist) Communist Party of India, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, Telugu Desam, etc., have their wings meant for the organisation of peasantry. The obvious interest of these political parties is to strengthen their Vote Bank through the organisation of these wings.
Some of these peasant organisations like Shetkhari Shanghatan, Bharatiya Kisan Union preferred to remain as non-political on the presumption that only non-political stance preserves horizontal unity and vertical solidarity, leading to effective mobilisation of peasantry to pursue the pressure course of action. Peasant organisations like the one's led by late Narayanaswami Naidu and Prof. Nanchundaswami in Tamilnadu and Karnataka respectively preferred to convert their non-political organisational identity into a political party in the early and mid 80s. This has resulted in politicisation and pressure group politics of peasantry in the annals of peasant movement in India.

1.6. PEASANT POLITICS IN TAMILNADU

The foregoing analysis on the political class characteristics of peasants amply makes clear the role played by peasants in various peasant movements in India. The peasant movements launched by political and non-political organisations in Tamilnadu in the recent past also substantiate this fact. The emergence of systematic organisation of peasantry in Tamilnadu identified only after the dawn of independence when political parties mainly the parties of radical ideology started organising lower strata of the peasantry in the form of Vivasayigal Sangam (Agriculturists’ Association) in various parts of the state. It took primarily the issues of fair wage to landless peasantry with the landed upper strata and fought for it. This type
of peasant movements were very strong in the canal, river and other assured irrigation pockets.

The decade 60s witnessed the emergence of spate of non-political peasant organisation which later adopted pressure tactics and organised the suffering peasants under its umbrella for getting fair treatment formed interest based peasant organisation consisting of small, marginal and agricultural labourers. Once their demands found unaccepted by the government they took to political course of action in order to capture state power. In this context the peasant movement led by Late Narayanaswami Naidu attracted cross-sections of agrarian community, irrespective of caste, religion and creed and launched series of agitation against the Government through various methods to redress their grievances. But all went without yielding any constructive results. This condition had necessitated conversion of the same organisation into a political party in the name of Indian Farmers and Toilers Party (IFTP) to contest elections politically and make alliances with other parties to capture state power.

Since conversion, the IFTP started its pressure course of action by establishing branches at various levels disseminated the ideology and organised the peasants allover Tamilnadu. The issues taken up by this political party relate to certain crucial problems of peasantry like remunerative prices, crop and cattle insurance,
waiving of co-operative loan, reduction in electricity tariff, marketing, credit, housing, irrigation, urban land ceiling distribution of essential commodities at fair prices to agricultural labourers, free housing to agricultural labourers etc.

The present study on this topic is an attempt on pressure group analysis and will throw light on the precipitant factors, abject conditions of peasants and circumstances leading to their political course of action, problems faced, consequence of their action and rural social structural changes identified in view of that. This kind of a research has policy implications and programme planning to rectify the genuine grievances of peasants in Tamilnadu.
REFERENCES


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