The interest of sociologists and social anthropologists on peasant studies is of very recent origin. But this does not mean that the area has completely been left out of a scientific enquiry. In the past, long before sociologists and social anthropologists, the historians, economists, political theorists had carried out studies but with perspectives specific to their own disciplines. The origin of the study of peasants and peasant societies dates back to the attempts made at the turn of the present century in the Eastern and Central Europe. This is because of the fact that these nations were then faced numerous problems by a large peasantry - the poorest, most backward and numerically a large population on its way to modernization. This situation has largely accounted for an ever-increasing scholarly engagement with peasant studies. During the first quarter of the twentieth century European research into peasantry had, however, encountered adverse conditions. The political developments such as the emergence of national ideologies of various kinds, military dictatorship and Russian Collectivisation etc. during this period had not favoured specific studies on peasant communities. In addition to this, the western scholars found it difficult to provide a distinctive place to peasants and peasant societies with the then prevailing conceptual scheme of industrial and pre-industrial societies (Xaxa 1988: 17). However, such studies were not altogether absent, a few studies were also undertaken. Barring a few studies (Chayanov 1925, Mitrany 1930, Arensberg 1937, Warriner 1939, Homans 1942, Firth 1946) the conceptual scheme of pre-industrial and industrial societies
prevailing then was not adequate enough to enable the scholars to give a distinctive place to peasants. However, the studies that were undertaken at the subsequent period with different theoretical persuasions gave rise to the anthropology of peasant as a discipline imparting to it scientific vigour and precision.

Of the theoretical persuasions that were prevalent then, the theory of cultural relativism opened up possibilities for the identifications of the distinctive features of the peasant societies. The search for the dimensions which would differentiate 'primitives' from 'peasants', members of 'simple societies from those of 'complex' societies was initiated. It is Kroeber's reconceptualisation of 'part-societies' and 'part-cultures' that opened the way for systematic peasant studies. Kroeber is usually credited for setting forth peasants as the subject matter for anthropology. He reformulated the existing conceptual categories of society and thereby drew the attention of the social anthropologists to peasantry who were earlier studying exclusively the small tribes and closed 'folk' communities. Peasant studies received further impetus by political developments after the second World War. During the 1940's and 50's the peasantry in different parts of the world had clearly entered the political process. The increasing participation of peasants in rebellions, revolutions and movements of political liberation made it urgent for the leaders and social scientists to turn their attention to peasant studies with new perspectives.

Redfield's book on Tepoztlan (1930) is the first full length study of a peasant community. Redfield adopted the Kroeberian
approach and substantiated it through his empirical work which set the trend of peasant studies. After a series of studies in Mexico he formulated the concept of 'folk-urban' continuum. While 'folk society' refers to the communities of the past, the urban society represents the contemporary living. Between these the peasant society is regarded as an intermediate concept within the above continuum. This continuum generated a debate among the anthropologists in America, when new information from various fields stated enriching the discipline. Subsequently, the trend to study peasants and their communities set in, and a group of studies of this kind figured in anthropological literature most of which are concerned with the cultural aspects of peasant communities. (Redfield and Rojas 1934, Embree 1939, Lewis 1951, Beals 1946, Redfield 1956, Wolf 1955). The presence of 'peasants' in all parts of the world considerably widened the field of anthropological research. Peasants inhabit the villages in the plains. Therefore, village is taken as the unit of the study. The awareness of peasantry as a social type led to several studies and contributed knowledge about its economy, ecology and cultural change. The changing situation of tribal communities from non-settled to settled agricultural economy as part of the study of peasant societies is analysed. The work of Fallers (1961: 108-10), Saul and woods (1971: 103-14) in Africa, Bailey (1960) and Sinha (1965) in India can be cited as examples thereof. Similarly, the condition of peasants in the plantation economy of the Carribeans is highlighted in the studies of Mintz (1974), Wolf (1955), and Feder (1979). The emergence of Marxist scholars with their emphasis on political economic and historical aspects of peasantry gave a new perspective
and dimension to the peasant studies. In this tradition a number of studies were made in different parts of the world. (Sahlins 1958, Meillassoux ed. 1971, 1972, Terray 1977, Godelier 1977, Bundy 1979, Kahn 1980).

Now with the development of new approaches and methods, the sociologists, social anthropologists and other social scientists of diverse theoretical frameworks have increasingly paid their attention to peasant studies. 'The Journal of Peasant Studies' and 'Peasant Studies', in England and America respectively, have been publishing research papers on cultural continuum, struggle, modes of production etc. Besides, nearly a dozen of books have come out containing both empirical and theoretical materials of new insights covering the relative position of peasants in society and their responses to changing economic and political conditions. These books collect empirical data entirely from the developing countries, particularly of Asia, Latin America and Africa. Notable among these are Thorner (ed.) 1967, Shanin (ed.) 1971, Harriss (ed.) 1982a, 1982b. and Mencher (ed.) 1983.

The entry of Indian sociologists and social anthropologists into the field of agrarian studies is even a phenomenon later than those of their western counterparts. It may be mentioned that the Indian sociology and anthropology was initially devoid of any indigenous perspective for understanding the agrarian society. As a consequence, theoretical concepts and methods for such studies came from the western social scientists. Later, a few social scientists developed their own theoretical concepts and methods for
peasant studies (Desai 1948, Mayer 1952, Mukherjee 1957, 1971). Desai (1948) focused on the agrarian issues like impoverishment of peasantry, commercialisation of agriculture, growing agricultural indebtedness, class structures and land transfers during the British period. Mayer (1952) has analysed the relationship between land and social structure in a Malbar village. In addition to this, Mukherjee (1957, 1971) has described the differentiation among the peasants in Bengal which provides a useful model for agrarian class analysis. But these studies were not able to draw further attention of sociologists and social anthropologists to this vast area of enquiry.

Since the 1950's the rural society of India has acquired new significance among social scientist. With the transfer of power from the Britishers to the Indians, there was an attempt to reshape the agrarian society in terms of framework, stratification system, modes of economic production and types of socio-cultural institutions. Thus changing situation made the sociologists and social anthropologists inclined towards agrarian studies (Thorner 1956, Desai ed. 1958, Bailey 1957, Dube 1958, Marriot ed. 1955, Srinivas ed. 1950). But it is seen that since the early sixties the studies on agrarian social structure and change have taken a distinctive shape. The impetus for it came from a series of studies by Daniel Thorner, P.C.Joshi and Andre Beteille. Thorner has described the social relationship existing among the agrarian categories within the broader framework of land, labour and credit relations. On the basis of his studies he developed the model of malik, kisan and mazdur for meaningful understanding of agrarian
classes in India (Thorner 1956, Thorner and Thorner 1962). Joshi concentrated on land reform measures, the rationale behind their formulations, the implementation of such programmes, and their consequences. The trends in the agrarian class structure and relationship as a result of these land reform programmes have also been highlighted in his studies (Joshi 1969a, 1969b, 1971). Beteille put forward a new conceptual framework for understanding the agrarian structure and focused on some of the important conceptual problems involved in agrarian analysis. The analysis of social relationship existing among various agrarian social categories and the pattern of inequality and conflict arising from ownership, control and use of land form a major part of his studies (1971, 1974a).

Following Redfield's approach of folk-urban continuum, the frameworks of tribe-caste, tribe-peasant, rural-urban continuum have generated and are still generating a considerable number of studies (Bailey 1960, Patnaik 1963, Sinha 1965, Majumdar 1972, Bhandari 1978, Goswami 1978). Similarly, the social differentiation and nature of class and class relations became the subject matter of a number of studies. The main thrust of these studies centered around the generation of surplus, its appropriation and their results (Sen 1962, Kumar 1968, Patnaik 1971a, 1971b, 1972a, 1972b, 1973, Saith and Tankha 1972, Rudra 1970, 1971, 1978, Shahin 1977, Shivakumar 1978, Pathy 1978, 1981a, 1984, Bardhan 1982). From these studies, it is revealed that some of the valuable contributions have come from other social science disciplines, particularly from Economics. From the
National Census it is known that the number of agricultural labourers in the country is going up from year to year despite emphasis on rural development. This has stimulated the social scientists to go into details of their types, social background, socio-economic problems, wage-structure, etc. Some of the studies focusing on this aspect of agrarian reality are of Patel 1952, Thorner and Thorner 1962, Bhandari and Rudra 1980. A good deal of studies have also been made relating to the peasant organisations, tensions and agitations, and their bearing on social structure. (Desai 1979 ed., Oommen 1975, Dhanagare 1983, Sengupta 1974, Karna 1981). Likewise, the issue of landless labourers' agitation has been receiving attention in some of the available studies (Oommen 1971a, 1971b, Pandey 1971, Alexandar 1975a, 1975b). Very recently the issue of agricultural indebtedness and the structure of both informal and formal credit-structure have been dealt with in a few studies (Dhanagare 1977, Pani 1987, Sarap 1991a, 1991b).

Land is the pivotal property of Indian rural economy around which entire agrarian structure revolves. Any change in land ownership structure brings corresponding changes in entire fabric of agrarian social structure. Some of the studies of agrarian structure have taken into account the issues of land alienation, land transfers, land concentration and landlessness over a certain period of time (Fuchs 1972, Patel 1974, Kulkarni 1974, 1982, Macdougall 1977, Dube and Ratna 1977, Eswaraiah 1978, Upadhyaya 1980, Vyas 1980, Mukherjee 1986, Shergill 1986, Mohanty 1992). Thus, in more recent years the bulk of literature on agrarian studies has considerably
increased in Indian sociology and social anthropology. However, most of the studies have been conducted by economists with their own orientation and the in-depth sociological study of agrarian communities covering all aspects of village economy is very limited.

**MAJOR approaches in the study of agrarian social structure:**

Any approach is based more on general considerations than on specific characteristics of a society. Approaches to the study of Indian agrarian social structure and change nonetheless reflect the major sociological and anthropological perspectives in general. Here an attempt has been made for a heuristic classification of these approaches under the following broad heads acknowledging that not all studies fit neatly into these categories.

**Evolutionary Approach:**

The studies based on this approach concentrated on the stages through which village communities and their various institutions passed in course of their growth in Indian society. This theory centres on two main lines of enquiry. They are: the reconstruction of specific development of agrarian systems using archeological and historical data that help us to search for repetitive processes and patterns of agrarian transformation; and the processes by which evolution takes place. Here emphasis was put uniformly on the factors which contributed to the origin and growth of village communities and their institutions. In the studies of this perspective villages and land systems were studied either to find out
the historical stage of growth or their comparative evolutionary sequence and succession of forms. (Maine 1890, Baden-Powell 1892, 1896, 1908). Maine was particularly concerned with placing the Indian village into an evolutionary scheme through which its linkage with the village communities in the West could be established. In his treatment of the process of feudalisation he clearly postulates a transition from 'village community' to manorial group which generally succeeds in an evolutionary sequence. Similarly, Baden Powell emphasised the 'origin and growth of the village communities in India. In his analysis of both land systems and forms of village communities he attempted to formulate an evolutionary scheme by which villages emerge in India from communal ownership to that based on joint-sharing and single landlord-ownership. According to him types of villages based on joint-zamindari and jagirdari systems could have evolved through a process of succession of dominant groups of conquest and settlement. By this the less dominant are gradually pushed back to landless categories through the process of marginalization and differentiation. There are also a few studies in this vein which have highlighted the typical characteristics of Indian village community and its evolution in different phases. (Mukherjee 1958, Kosambi 1956, Malaviya 1969). A number of empirical studies are also available that describe the inter-play of economy and social structure of villages. Mann's (1921) study of Deccan village and Wiser's study (1936) of the jajmani system and rural social structure can be included under this category.
The major loopholes of this approach are that it attempts to analyse the change in the villages in the forms and functions between two points of time. In most of the cases the generalisations are based on the data derived from myths, epics, folklores, etc. to the exclusion of a serious study of the internal dynamics of agrarian relations in village communities. It therefore, fails to offer any conceptual framework for indepth analysis of agrarian social structure. The sole difficulty of this perspective is that it lacks an intensive ethnographic base. The typologies are static by nature and they cannot yield productive insights into the matters of processes and development (Lewis: 1967).

Ethnographic-Cultural Approach:

The studies based on this approach are generally known as community studies. They tend to highlight the totality of the community, social institutions and cultural sphere of people studied in rural and tribal India. In this approach most of the studies have adopted Redfield's analytical model applied to the study of village social structure (Singer 1959, Marriot 1955). Singer has attempted to understand the Indian social structure in the 'little tradition' and 'Great tradition' model. Marriot also terms the mode of interaction between the 'Little tradition' and the 'Great tradition' in Indian villages as 'universalisation' and 'parochialisation'. While the former refers to the process whereby the elements of 'Little Tradition' circulate upward to the level of the 'Great tradition', the latter represents the downward percolation of Great tradition.
Here a continuum of 'Tribe' to 'Emergent Peasant' or 'Proto peasant' to 'Peasant' is developed. Bhandari (1978) coined the term 'Emergent peasant' for a tribe which practices settled cultivation without being involved in the 'Great tradition' of the wider society. He justified the term as the Hinduized and Christianized settled agriculturalist tribals who maintain their social boundary and do not participate fully in the 'Great tradition'. Goswami (1978) called the 'Emergent peasant' of Bhandari as 'Proto-peasant' for the same reasons. The 'Great tradition of the caste structure was taken as the point of reference to analyse the change in tribal societies.

Thus, the studies so formulated incorporating this approach were confined to the construction of typologies of peasant and tribal societies. The cultural factors were considered central to the understanding of peasant society and the evolving conditions of production had not been taken into account in ample measure. The social differentiation and stratification in the tribal and peasant societies seldom received the attention they actually deserved. The network of social arrangement in land thus, if not neglected, did not get adequate attention. All these may be due to the typical orientation of social anthropologists which could not be shed away inspite of the discovery of new subject matter for their studies (Beteille 1974b: 58). The analysis of this perspective neglects to a large extent the structural and functional aspects of change of the communities.
Structural and Functional Approach:

This approach has been found to be one of the popular models for understanding Indian social structure and has influenced a good deal of studies. Here the units of observation are not ideas, sentiments and values, but the order of roles and statuses which form the basis of social relationship. This approach hinges on the assumption that the regular patterns of behaviour are perceived as having some function in relation to the creation and maintenance of order in societies and thus tries to maintain a state of equilibrium within the community as a whole. It is primarily concerned with the identification of the emerging principles, new rules and the consequent differentiation and transformation in the institutionalised forms of social relationship and their ordering in society. For example, the abolition of intermediary rights in land was intended to alter the pre-existing modes of power asymmetry in the agrarian society. The extent to which this asymmetry has been reformed may be an instance of change in the system. Thus, studies developed by the sociologists and social anthropologists of this perspective try to explain change as something which comes about as the result of external forces acting upon the locality (Bailey 1957, Epstein 1962, 1973). Bailey in his usual way of processual study of an Orissan village has explained how the internal organisation of the village has been changed as a result of the extension of economic and administrative frontiers (1957). Scarlett Epstein (1962) in his study of economic development and social change in Wangala and Delana, the two villages of Mysore, describes the contrasting responses in these
two villages to the development of an irrigation system by the state. In a further study (1973) of the same villages she has explained how the extension of irrigation, the package programmes and price-boom of jaggery accelerated further the growth into an already expanded economy. Both the villages have changed considerably in appearance since she made her visit. In addition to this, there are also a number of studies which have been conducted following this approach. Notable among these are Sinha 1969, Patnaik 1969, Wisers and Wisers 1971, Iswaran 1936, 1971, Kessinger 1974. The village factionalism and the distribution of power have also been discussed at length in some of the studies with this approach. The factional sub-division articulates the tension arising out of the vertical and horizontal cleavages in the social stratification especially under the impact of the measures of social and economic reforms. The question as to how this process really begins, functions and affects the structural form of village community has been studied by many social anthropologist and sociologists. (Bailey 1963, McCormack 1959, Mayer 1966, Nicholas 1963, 1965, 1968, Orenstein 1965, Singh 1971). Srinivas has also analysed this process in a Mysore village. He used the term 'dominant caste' to interpret a new mode of power relationship that emerges when new forces of social change begin to operate in the social system of the village (Srinivas 1955 and 1959).

However, the drawback of this perspective in the study of agrarian social structure and change is that it offers an a-historical picture of society. The structural functionalists restrict their attention to the process of change in caste
stratification neglecting the class structure. It is an approach which ignores the relationship of mutual determination between the locality and the state in which each exercises some determining influence on the other and undermines the process of change which may be internal to peasant communities. Thus, the application of the structural functional approach in studying Indian society does not discourage the simultaneous use of indological and ethnographic resources of information for understanding the society (Sharma: 1971: 15).

**Political Economy Approach:**

The political economy approach to the understanding of Indian agrarian structure is a very recent phenomenon. By 'political economy' is meant domination of man by man through the control of means of production and distribution (Shanin 1971: 140). Its' main thrust is on how the environment becomes an object of human use in the course of production; how people are organised to carry out production; how surplus is generated and transferred from one set of human beings to another and the like. All these restructuring processes enumerated above have been made possible by an enquiry into the diversity of attitudes and values, the different kinds of settlements and the variable quality of social relations under different historical contingencies. The structure of social relationships and conflict based upon the differences in ownership and control of resources by different groups of people is critically important in the studies of this kind. The studies of this kind try to understand peasantry within the broader framework of larger

All these social scientists are not unanimous about their arguments regarding the political economy of Indian agriculture. A number of differences exist among them on several issues. The general debate on the political economy of Indian agriculture is, however, much complex involving several strands of variant ideas. The first strand of ideas to which Ashok Rudra, Daniel Thorner, Utsa Patnaik, P. Chattopadhaya and R.S. Rao subscribe centres around the theoretical issue of the proper identification of the capitalist mode of production and the empirical question of whether, when and to what degree a capitalist mode had arisen in the Indian agriculture. While Ashok Rudra, Daniel Thorner, R.S. Rao and others argue that the capitalist relations have not yet been evident in Indian agrarian economy, Utsa Patnaik, P. Chattopadhaya and others opine that there has been a clear cut trend towards the growth of capitalist agriculture leading to the emergence of two distinct classes - capitalist farmers and agricultural labourers. This is why it is said that the Indian agrarian economy is characterised as capital without capitalism.
The second strand of ideas are about the international aspects of the question of the mode of production at a theoretical level. Here too while A.G. Frank and others maintain that the economic beings drained are capitalist, J. Banaji, H. Alavi and others describe it as colonial mode of production. Similarly in the third strand involve a debate on the semi-feudal nature of Indian agricultural economy. Amit Bhaduri, Nirmal Chandra, B. Baboo, P.H. Prashad and others have entered the debate and argue differently on this issue on the basis of empirical studies of villages in West Bengal, Bihar and Orissa.

Though the political-economy approach has some advantages over other approaches and it provides a useful framework for the thorough and in-depth understanding of the realities, it becomes at times a deterministic approach to the agrarian social structure. This study, for its part, tries to compromise with two aforesaid approaches for understanding the same realities to sort out the aspects of integration, conflict and the generated differentiation. These two approaches together enrich the understanding of social structures particularly in the context of new forces and constraints of social change in rural India (Sharma 1971).

For the present study such an approach has been preferred to the others despite a full knowledge of its limitations. However, while undertaking the study the important aspects of the other approaches have also been taken into account and they have been applied wherever possible for a relatively broad and comprehensive
understanding of the socio-economic structure of an irrigated village, its change, its relationship with the wider society within the triangular matrix of land, labour and credit. Further, this study seeks to locate the processes of land alienation and depeasantisation within the said matrix.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The major objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To examine land and labour relations in Sambalpur district and their historicity.

2. To analyse the land, labour and credit relations in the village and their interlinkages.

3. To understand the socio-economic relations among various peasant categories.

4. To describe the power structure of the village and its contribution to the process of land alienation and depeasantisation.

5. To examine the mechanism of land transactions and landlessness.

6. To identify the nature, extent and intensity of land alienation and depeasantisation.

7. To identify the critical land size in the village.
HYPOTHESES:

The study intends to verify the relevance of the following hypotheses.

1. Land alienation and depeasantisation is a historical process.

2. Such a process affects early settlers more than that of the subsequent settlers.

3. Acquisition of land leads to the acquisition of power over the land-based resources.

4. The development of infrastructures such as irrigation, mechanisation and formal credit facilities in the process of modernizing the agricultural practices have expediated the land alienation and depeasantisation process.