CHAPTER - 3

THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK
In undertaking an empirical research the formulation of a relevant conceptual framework at the theoretical level is a sensible methodological requirement to illuminate and explain the empirical information. The researchers having a definite issue to investigate and questions to answer would invariably begin their empirical studies armed with a conceptual theoretical framework (Oommen 1988: 32). Here a modest attempt has been made to operationalise the basic concepts used in the present study.

**Peasant:**

Though the social scientists of diverse intellectual persuasions have studied peasants in different places and at different times, the concept of 'peasant' has never been used consistently or unambiguously and some have employed the term as if it is a self-explanatory concept. Even the social anthropologists who are specially concerned with peasant studies are not free from such ambiguity. However, the social anthropologists have attempted to use the term in a more specific and technical sense. Ironically, their definitions are not only dissimilar, but also contradictory to one another. So, since there is not a perfectly unanimous view among the social anthropologists as regards what constitute 'peasant', 'peasantry' and 'peasant society', it would not be scientific to adopt any one of the definitions blindly for empirical analysis. Before developing our own definition let us closely examine some of the important definitions which have been widely referred.
To begin with, A.L. Kroeber defines peasants as those who "constituting part societies with part cultures, definitely rural, yet live in a relation to a market town .... (those who) lack the isolation, political autonomy and self-sufficiency of tribal population, yet their local units maintain much of their old identity, integration and attachment to the soil" (1923: 284). This has led to dispute and contention in peasant studies because both the tribal cultivators and modern farmers have also a claim to the title of peasant. There are some studies in India where the tribals have been categorised as peasants (MARENTIN 1972, MANDAL 1975, PATHY 1976, UPADHYAYA 1980, BOSE 1981, ROY 1982). Faller, for example, has attempted to draw a definitional line between those African cultivators who could be called 'tribal' and those who could be called 'peasant' concluding that rural-urban cultural gap in Africa is less wide than that of Asia and Europe (1961: 176). Raymond Firth (1946) used the term peasant as a socio-economic category and included non-cultivators like artisan and fisherman into such category. Firth's definition seems too broad and it makes it difficult to distinguish peasants from non-peasants. Robert Redfield one of the pioneers among the anthropologists in the field of peasant studies views peasants as those small producers who make a living and have a way of life through cultivation of land (1956: 18). Unlike Firth, he does not want to use the term 'peasant' other than cultivators who produce for their own consumption. For example, he did not include collectors, hunters, fishermen, and herdsmen in the concept of peasant. Further, Redfield follows scrupulously Eric Wolf to make
the definition more specific. Eric Wolf defines peasant as small scale agricultural producers whose concern is subsistence not reinvestment. To him, peasants do not look upon land as a capital commodity (1955: 452-471). Incorporating this idea of Wolf, Redfield confined the term peasants to those small agriculturalists for whom agriculture is a livelihood not a business for profit (1956: 27). Adopting Kroeberian approach he goes on elaborating the definition by saying that the culture of a peasant community is not autonomous, it is a dimension of civilisation of which it is a part (1956: 68). Hence, he explained the inclusive character of peasantry with the wider society through 'great traditions' and their 'exclusive character' by their own 'little traditions'. Thus, Redfield's definition of peasants has two major elements. While the first refers to their mode of livelihood, second refers to their position in relation to the elite of manor, town or city. This definition becomes unanswerable when we turn to India where there is a multiplicity of land rights (Beteille 1974 b: 46). Further, the division between a lower stratum of peasants and the upper stratum of non-peasants represents not a division between village and town or village and city, but a cleavage within the village itself (ibid: 46). Teoder Shanin (1971) provides a comprehensive definition in which he views peasant society in terms of four basic facets: (1) The peasant family farm as the basic unit of multidimensional social organisation ..... (2) Land husbandry as the main means of livelihood directly providing the major part of
consumption needs ....3. Specific traditional culture related to the way of life of small communities ....4. The underdog position - the domination of peasantry by outsiders'.

Shanin's definition reflects both the Redfield's and Marxists or Leninist perspective on peasants. The difference between the two perspectives describes the 'functional' and 'dichotomous' views of society (Ossowski 1963). While the former emphasises on the organic bonds between peasantry, gentry and other social strata, the latter projects the cleavage between an exploited class of peasants and their exploiters. But like Redfield, Shanin used the terms peasant and peasant society and peasant community almost interchangeably and treated village as the locus of a relatively homogeneous community of peasants (Beteille 1974 : 46-47). The assumption of village as the homogeneous community of peasants is not typical only to Redfield and Shanin, it is common almost to all the European scholars. There is a popular conception among them that those who live in the village are peasants and the village is where peasants live. They have treated peasant as a differentiated lot separated sharply from that of class societies. Thus, the definitions developed in Europe do not give a comprehensive meaning to understand the Indian situation in whichever way we look at it. In India, we have a complex structure of land tenures with a mixture of ancient India, muslim and British notions and practices of landholding along with post independent modernizing
features (Thorner 1968: 506) and the village communities are clearly differentiated in terms of caste, ownership, control and use of land. Even within India, definition of peasants developed in one region may not be uniformly applicable for situation available elsewhere because of the complex sociocultural customs, practices and ecological differences. Therefore, much of the confusion over the proper limits of the term can be clarified by specifying what category or categories one wishes to operationally include or exclude. Here for our purpose, a household has been treated as peasant on the basis of the following four elements.

(a) It is a general agreement among the social anthropologists that peasants are associated with land. Since landholding being a necessary condition to enter into peasant occupation, the household should occupy a quantum of land, be that land belongs to it or someone else in revenue record.

(b) It must cultivate the land using the family labour, though the hiring-in and selling of labour power is also quite possible.

(c) It must produce for its own consumption, however, with the increase of holding it apart from own consumption, produces for market.
(d) The household is also described as a unit with subordinate relationships to external markets, the state and the dominant culture.

Depeasantisation:

On the concept of 'depeasantisation' there is scanty literature. In Marxian analysis depeasantisation is considered as the process which has resulted due to the penetration of capital. Strictly speaking, Marx did not point out any basic trend towards depeasantisation, he and Engels only envisaged the ultimate "disappearance of the distinction between town and country" (Giner and Guzman 1980: 19). Later, Lenin equated the term with the utter dissolution of peasantry and the creation of a new type of rural inhabitants (1899). The conception of depeasantisation is linked with the concept of peasant. We have taken it as the process by which a peasant household gradually loses its peasant character described earlier.

Land Alienation:

The literary meaning of alienation refers to separation or detachment. The concept of 'alienation' has entered into modern sociology from German idealistic philosophy especially by the way of Hegel. But Hegelian alienation was at a metaphysical level and it is non-acceptable to the existing material reality. It was Marx who redefined the idea with a clearcut dimension and used it as a tool for sociological
enquiry. To Marx, alienation means "that man does not experience himself as the acting agent in his grasp of the world, but that the World (nature, others and himself) remain alien to him. They stand above and against him as objects, even though they may be objects of his own creation" (Fromm 1955). To be more systematic and precise, alienation is disconnection, separation - the process by which human beings are cut adrift from their natural mooring in the world as a result of unnatural alien arrangements (Erikson 1980: 2). It seems to account for a variety of sources such as institution of private property, mechanisation, complex division of labour, commoditisation of human labour and the like. Alienation of man can take four forms: (i) from the product of labour, (ii) from himself, (iii) from the process of production and (iv) from fellow creatures (Marx 1959: 71-75).

The above background provides us with a framework for the definition of the concept of 'land alienation'. By 'land alienation' we mean the process by which a household is detached from the land that it occupies. In other words, the land becomes alien to the household and no more remains within its control. The concept has been applied to the agrarian relations of Sambalpur to be understood in the context of issues like commoditisation of land and labour, mechanisation of agricultural practices and penetration of private and state capital into agriculture at the village level.
The Concept of Class:

Any attempt to use the concept of class for an empirical analysis requires a clearcut meaning of the term. Though it is well known that the concept is treated as the powerful tool for scientific analysis by the Marxist scholars, the full connotation of class is non-existent in the entire body of Marxian literature either in classics or later day works (Rudra 1978: 916). However, it was Lenin who elaborated the concept adopting the ideas of Marx. In this tradition class is defined as a group of individuals with specific relationship to the means of production. The widespread view that the ownership of the means of production as the criterion of class division is overplayed. It is based on the assumption that the ownership of means of production implies the ownership of surplus value which is not all the time true. Therefore, classes are defined by the social relations of production, not by simple access to means of production (Pathy 1984: 37). The social relations of production refer to the mode of appropriation of surplus labour. Thus, by discerning the structure of appropriation of surplus labour the class structure can be revealed, however, the analysis should intend to examine the specific influence of the ownership of the means of production.

Peasant Classes:

The compartmentalization of the peasants in terms of classes is closely tied to the conditions under which surplus is generated, appropriated, consumed and reinvested. Since
theoretical description is the first approximation of the empirical reality here the peasant classes have been identified in terms of family labour, outside labour, landholding, etc. on the basis of various agrarian studies undertaken in India and abroad. In the appropriate chapter a detail explanation on the conceptualization of the class positions is given taking into account the field situation.

Landlords refers to the households who own large quantum of land and get their land cultivated by sharecroppers. They never participate in the process of production and a portion of their land is also remain uncultivated. They invest the surplus on conspicuous consumption and are not interested in expanded reproduction.

Rich Peasants are those who own substantial amount of land along with agricultural implements. But unlike the landlords they physically participate in the production process and invest the surplus in further production. Though they contribute labour they largely rely on hired-in labour. They are the most calculative, risk taking and innovative peasants.

Middle Peasants are those who own average quantum of land which make them selfsufficient. Like rich peasants they also depend on hiring labour services, participate in the production process and try to reinvest the surplus for expanded production. The most
distinguishable feature is that their inevitable surplus and resource are much less than that of the rich peasants. Further, in their life styles, cultural behaviour and consumption pattern they imitate the rich peasants.

Small Peasants are not merely the smallest landowners but are also vigorously engaged to replace hired labour with household labour. They are unable to reproduce themselves through household production and therefore sell their labour power to augment the family income. These households are also the largest sharecroppers since their own small holding is insufficient for the consumption requirement. Because of the constant deficit most of them are indebted to the credit agents.

Agricultural Labourers neither own cultivable land nor the agricultural implements at all. They earn their livelihood mainly by selling their labour in agriculture and allied activities either as free or as attached labourers.

The households of the village may or may not neatly correspond to these categories because the properties of this scheme of classification have been borrowed from other socio-cultural and ecological milieu.
CHAPTER - 4

THE METHOD AND CONSTRUCTION OF THE STUDY
The purpose of the study is to examine the dynamics of land alienation and depeasantisation in the developed pockets of Orissa portraying the result of an empirical exercise. For this, an irrigated village has been taken as a case. The rationale behind understanding such problem, taking into account village as a case, is that a village in Indian context is often described as a peasant community (Dube 1969) and land is the pivotal feature of village economy (Beteille 1971: 204, Sarkar 1971: 297, Panda 1979: 298). Everyone in the village including members of the specialist group make a living from land and indeed it is the most valued property. Since the problem attempts to understand the land-peasant relationship and its various dimensions in concrete detail, it can be best studied at the village level. Apart from this, village constitutes the unit of the rural society and it is the matrix within which the whole drama of rural life unfolds (Desai 1969: 9). We have selected only a single village for indepth study. More acquaintance with the actual conditions of life can be obtained by a close enquiry of a single village if it is well chosen (Mann and Kanitkar 1921: iii)

Selection of the Village:

The reliability of an enquiry is largely dependent on the importance given to the choice of the field. Much care has been taken in selecting a representative village. Moreover, representativeness is always relative and it is determined by the nature and purpose of the study. Villages vary in many respects and
the representativeness has meaning only in relation to the perspective the researcher throws on a problem. (Seshaiah 1979:236).

Out of 13 districts of Orissa a village has been selected from Sambalpur district because of the following reasons:

(1) It is the only district of Orissa where vast changes in agriculture have taken place since the construction of the multipurpose Hirakud Dam. Large scale areas criss-crossed with canals, have indeed marked the onset of a green revolution along with the growth of heavy and light industries in and around Sambalpur, Bargarh & Jharsuguda. A concentration of people in these places from outside the district and the State have restructured the agrarian structure of Sambalpur.

(2) Sambalpur is often described as the tribal land and it was long under the Gond and Binjhal chiefs (Dist Gazetteer 1971). The whole gamut of land of the district was under the control of the tribals. But over periods the traditional landownership right of the tribals have been threatened and there is a perpetual decline of tribal landowners (Panda 1986: 68).

(3) The district has got a complex land revenue laws both written and customary. The district also represents both tribal and non-tribal ethos in agrarian relations and it also offers diversity of social customs on account of the prevlance of a large number of caste groups (Satpathy 1979).
Irrigation being the major source of agricultural modernization which has brought about paramount changes in Sambalpur, a completely irrigated C.D. Block was selected in the second round. Out of 29 C.D. Blocks of Sambalpur, canal irrigation covers 10. From among these irrigated blocks Attabira C.D. Block was found suitable because it is recognised as the rice bowl of Sambalpur. So far as the indices of agricultural modernization are concerned, it tops the list. After the selection of the block, we collected the total number of villages coming under Attabira block from its office. From this list we chose those villages which are exposed to a large number of infrastructural facilities like cooperatives, veterinary office, educational institutions, market, etc., and discarded the rest. As a matter of fact, we were left with only 12 such villages which suit our sampling procedure. From the Revenue Inspector's office of the respective villages we examined the three subsequent land settlement records and chose a village which shows maximum perpetual decline of number of the land holders. But the village chosen in this way is inhabited by only one ethnic group, so we picked the village named Mahakhand which lies next to it on the same principle for its multi-ethnic character.

After the selection of the village the researcher visited it. When it was found that the village in question is the case in point to understand the process of land alienation and depeasantisation, the fieldwork was undertaken from December 1989, and it continued upto the end of 1991. For the present study census method has been adopted in place of sampling method for the
collection of data. Census method was adopted because the complex picture of land alienation and depeasantisation may not be spotted by merely taking into account sample households as there is every possibility of exclusion of those households which may contribute largely to the above process. Besides, as the village structure is a complex one covering social, cultural, economic and other aspects, it is not so simple as it appears to be. It was therefore thought that Census of the village would enable us to know the entire complex mechanism of village life.

The Parameters of the Study:

Land, labour and credit have been taken as the major parameters of the study. Land, being the key instrument to measure the intensity and the extent of land alienation and depeasantisation, constitutes the most important parameter. But the agrarian relations cannot be adequately explained when we use land as the single parameter. In addition to land, labour is an essential unit of class analysis. While it is accepted that the size of land in rural India broadly relates to use of labour, the rate of exploitation and its magnitude are dependent on many factors besides land such as credit, market etc. Therefore, exploitation is to be judged in terms of many determinants other than land merely (Pathy 1984: 121). Furthermore, though the units of land and labour largely determine the perimeters of agrarian relations, the role of credit (both formal and informal) cannot be ignored because it plays a vital role in cementing the land labour relations. Also rural credit system forms one of the major sources of land alienation and depeasantisation (Dhanagare 1979: 121). For analysis, these parameters have been taken as isolated
categories and later their interlinkage has been established. Apart from these, irrigation, ethnicity, income and education have also been used as the parameters of the study.

**Unit of Investigation:**

Household being the basic unit of production and consumption in a peasant economy (Shanin 1973: 141-72), we have selected it as our unit of investigation. By household we mean the members sharing the same hearth and living under the same roof. The members of such group are bound by ties of Kinship. Guests and visitors are excluded from the unit of household.

**Tools Adopted:**

There can be no clear-cut prescribed formula for handling any given field situation. While there are certain standardized research tools, the way in which they are used and the result they yield depend on the rapport which the researcher is able to establish with his informants (Chakravarti 1979:38). As regards the tools adopted, because of the complicacies involved in the rural society, no single tool can help the researcher to get adequate scientific data. So we have adopted census schedule, interview guide and case study as our major tools of data collection.

**Data Collection:**

For more systematic operation of the tools selected, data were collected in phases. The first phase of information was collected by informal interviews with individuals belonging to
different ethnic groups of different ages regarding the general aspect of the village and its agriculture. The information so collected includes the history of the village, its formation and growth, types of labour, types of land and informal credit market, etc. With this much of knowledge, we have prepared a structured census-schedule in detail. A pre-testing was undertaken to assess the validity of the questions included in the schedule. In the pre-testing we had taken 10% of the total households and this amounts to 18.9 households of the village. We interviewed the head of the household of every 10th households, but the last household taken was the 9th one. This pre-testing enabled us to modify and rearrange some of our questions and lastly the final census schedules were cyclostyled, and were administered on all households of the village. They included information on family particulars, landownership, production and consumption pattern, lending, borrowings and the like.

Before starting the second phase, we first looked thoroughly into the census schedules so filled in duly. This helped us to get the overall picture of the village. Then we used interview-guide to collect the qualitative data. We did not use structured interview schedules. Rather we framed broad questions in specific areas like the use of land and labour, distribution of socio-political power, nature of agrarian conflicts, conditions of land selling, purchasing and mortgaging, genealogy of landholding, etc. The conventional method of going to the field with a readymade interview schedule to collect the data is found erroneous (Saberwal 1974: 42-63) and does not give a clear picture of the field.
Therefore, we used interview guides to allow the respondent to explain events from their own points of view. Since our unit of investigation is household, the head of the households were only interviewed. However, in some cases, where the heads remained absent, other senior members were contacted.

Finally, on the basis of the information gathered, a few households were selected for case study. This was intended to provide indepth qualitative information on some specific matters. It included a brief sketch of informants' life history, land based conflicts and tensions, disputes over credit and debt, etc. Apart from this, some interesting and relevant data were also collected simultaneously through observation such as employer-employee relationship, village conflicts, etc. In order to collect the information on land holding of each household in preceeding generations, genealogy method has been employed. Generally social realities have their antecedents and their roots in the past. To gain an insight into the persistence and change of institutions and practices prevalent in the village, and to explore the extending nature of social facts, the people's history has been referred to wherever required. The collected data were cross-checked and verified at each stage of its collection.

The required secondary data were collected mainly from the various records and reports available in Sambalpur University Library, Parija Library, Utkal University, Orissa State Archives, H.K.M. Library, Bhubaneswar; Revenue Inspector's office, Godbhaga; Block Office, Attabira; Tahasil Office, Bargarh; Panchayat Samiti
Office, Larambha, District Statistical Office, Sambalpur, etc. Along with these, the related sociological and anthropological materials from various books and journals were reviewed.

Procedures of Analysis and Interpretation:

The collected data were tabulated and some formal statistics were used for analysis. Land, labour, credit and income were quantified on the basis of the following principles:

Since there are four major types of cultivable land in the village and the quality of land is heterogeneous, all types of lands were converted into the lowest category on the basis of revenue fixed by the Govt. of Orissa. While converting, the production and market value of the land have not been taken into consideration.

As the appropriation of surplus labour has been taken as one of the principal indicators for characterising the differentiation among the peasants, much care has been taken in collecting the exact number of labour days. Taking the number of labour days into account the rate of exploitation of labour has been calculated using the following formula:

\[ R = \frac{a - b}{b + c} \]  

(Pathy 1984: 80)

Here, 
- \( R \) = rate of exploitation
- \( a \) = labour days hired in
- \( b \) = labour days hired out
- \( c \) = labour days in own land.
After calculation of rate of exploitation, the following criteria have been applied to identify the class structure.

\[ R = 0 \] (middle peasant)
\[ R = + \text{low} \] (rich peasant)
\[ R = + \text{high} \] (landlord)
\[ R = - \text{low} \] (small peasant)
\[ R = - \text{high} \] (labourer)

In the above calculation, the phenomena of reciprocal exchange of labour, child labour and unrecognised labour services have not been included. In the appropriate chapter a clear explanation of the above formula has been given.

All the incomes of households were converted into rupees. The annual production of the paddy, grains and vegetables were converted into rupees taking the average of the costs at three different periods viz., during pre-productive, productive and post-productive periods. In a few cases due to the complexities of certain sources of incomes, an approximate value has been taken after careful consideration. This approximation has been cross-checked from the neighbouring villages. Similarly, all the credits and debts have been converted to rupees.

Of the two strategies adopted for interpreting rural social change: (1) to look from above (Sekhar 1968) and (2) to start from below (Srinivas 1960, Marriot 1955), we have followed the latter.
That means interpretation has been made from the alienated and depeasantised households. In fact, a household is not born depeasantised. It must have become so only afterwards. This provided us with interesting clues such as why a household has been depeasantised, how it is depeasantised, who nourished the process, what the consequence of depeasantisation is etc. The economic organisation of the village comprising the production and distribution of economic activities, co-operation, contradictions and mutual obligations among different members and groups have been analysed and interpreted in the context of agricultural development and modernization taking into account their historicity. Both the interactional and attributional dimensions have been taken into consideration while analysing the above issues. The interactional criterion, which is operational and dialectical in nature, is concerned with the process of differentiation, mobilisation and confrontation. It predicts change in the class stratification and the social system as a whole (Baboo 1987b: 42). The attributional approach involves different criteria like caste, status, occupation, income, etc. along with borrowing, repayment and utilisation capacity.

**Field Experience:**

In the beginning the villagers did not co-operate with us. The day we first arrived at the village, we met a few persons, but they were afraid of talking to us. When we explained our purpose, the people and children encircled us and soon we became the target of a
series of questions. But astonishingly they avoided us to give any information and told that the secrets of the village and its households could not be revealed unless permitted by the Gountia. So we met the Gountia and virtually there was a good number of well-educated persons in his family. They realised our need and directed the villagers to co-operate and also permitted us to stay in the village until our work was over. People started passing comments: "Election time has arrived and so many people will come like this". Some described us as "Sankhyakaris" (Census reporters). We explained all the villagers that we were from Sambalpur University and information would be used only for our study purpose. Then people started addressing us as 'pathuababu' (an educated gentleman). For the first 10 to 15 days, not only the amount of information was meagre, but also it tended to be vague and erroneous. Even simple demographic information in the household census conducted at this time had many inaccuracies. We corrected the errors and filled the gap later. In a sense, the first 10 to 15 days of field work were not necessarily wasted. The errors and gaps acquired meaning in due course of time. A closer examination of the circumstances in which particular individuals supplied false information revealed significant facts which helped us to an enormous extent in getting new clues. People, in a few cases, refused to disclose the name of money-lenders and the amount they borrowed and credited. In most of the cases the employer did not allow the labourers to be interviewed on the plea that they were illiterates and would not understand the question and, therefore, would narrate things improperly. In such
cases, we managed the situation and met the labourers later individually. The researcher being an unmarried male, certain difficulties were faced while collecting information from the women and young girls. The last but not the least difficulty was the problem of communication. As the researcher is from coastal Orissa, he lacked the ability to converse with the people in the local dialect. In the eyes of local residents the researcher due to his tongue was also referred to as 'Katkia'. It is a term suggesting contempt for and distrust of the exploiters from the coastal Orissa, which the "local" people have harboured for generations together. Though the actual circumstances under which the term was coined and its historical date cannot be ascertained, it is, however, believed that the large scale inflow of the people from coastal regions better equipped in terms of education, enterprise and capability than the natives, at the advent of the Hirakud Dam, had resulted in deep-seated tension between son of the soil and the migrants. Against this background the term expresses the animus of the local people towards those of the coastal regions. As such, we were not spared the distrust and hostility of people for being speakers of standard Oriya which in native parlance is the "Katki" language.

Limitations of the Study:

Some limitations have been mentioned in the text at appropriate places, however, the following limitations need special mention.
The analysis of the problem has been confined only to the village under study. In certain issues the village has been described in the wider context of the district of Sambalpur. With the analysis of village data the study characterizes the Orissan agrarian development and shows the dynamics of 'other side' of development.

While describing the history of the village and reconstructing the landholding records of the households the study depends upon the memory of the respondents.

The limitations of time and financial constraints have restricted the scope of enquiry to probe further.