Chapter 1

VILLAGE AND ITS EXTENSION
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Introduction

The villages are not isolated entities, but are well connected with several outside units like family, castes, division of labour, exogamy, migration, economic ties and the market. Recognized as a unit of development, villages now have several formal and statutory institutions and large political parties have their offices in these villages. The parties also have their political agents in many villages. According to S.C. Dubey, the village is not a corporate group, but it has an identity, fixed limits (revenue and forest), village commons, and shared resources like wells and tanks. Contrary to the previous famous, that villages are little republics and they have everything within them and have nothing to do with outside political phenomena, is not correct. In other words, we can say that the villages are well connected with the outside world. Thus, the village studies cannot be undertaken without taking into consideration the other extensions of it.

Today, villages have ceased to be an independent, self sufficient and autonomous unit in a wider sense of the term. Still, in certain domestic and internal affairs they maintain an independent and

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1 S.C. Dubey, Indian Society, National Book Trust, Delhi, 1996.
autonomous character. The various castes residing in the villages are interrelated with one another in different spheres. S.C. Dubey² mentions mainly three aspects of inter-jati and inter-personal relationship within the village.

- First, the interdependence of jaties through the exchange of specialized occupational services;
- The functioning of village panchayats generally involving representation of all jaties residing in the village in addition to jati panchayats; and
- Thirdly the factional politics of the village.

Each caste has their own occupation traditionally linked to them and interactions between several castes were maintained by jajmani systems. However, jajmani system was not uniform all over India. The villages in normal way had two panchayats:

- caste panchayats and
- Village panchayats.

Caste panchayats usually consists of several jati members and in general they dealt with the overall problems of the village. On the other hand, the caste panchayats used to look after the affair of intra-caste relationships and property and family disputes. After independence the statutory panchayats were added. These statutory panchayats were

²ibid
created to mobilize the people up to village level for developmental works and decentralization of power. The statutory village panchayats are located in the larger villages or several small villages are grouped together under one panchayat. As the locus of power helps in understanding the ways of the power structure operating in the villages, it should be enquired that, whether the same is concentrated in few members of the village or in the village panchayat or with the dominant castes of the village.

Factionalism is also an important feature of village social life. It represents power relationships and alignments among the villagers. Each faction is built around one or more influential and powerful individuals, who normally are supported by the families and kinship groups. In a single village there may have several factions. Each and every village thus, is seen in the context of its networks.

Inter village relation develops in case where the village does not have sufficient number of the service rendering castes. In other words, it seeks jajmani relations with those from neighboring villages. Kinship ties also extend to several villages, near or distant, and also to neighbouring towns. In past, the instances of inter-village panchayats are also found. The several castes in a village maintain a pattern of relationship prescribed by the caste system itself. The caste system, still define and shape the village social relationships and village social structure. We can
say that, the caste system to a large extent, determine the social, behavioural, ritualistic and traditional expectations and interests of the villagers.

**Rationale of Study**

Rural life in Bihar is quite complex because of the peculiar functioning of caste, class, interest groups and factions. Though, rural scenario has transformed due to land reforms and other governmental measures, a new class structure have emerged. Traditional caste rigidity has weakened. Caste alliances and combinations have occurred particularly in the wake of Mandal commission. Such alliances are now functioning as power blocs and political formations.

Lower castes, taking the advantage of constitutional provisions and motivated by anti-upper-caste sentiments, have started a campaign of emancipation from the upper caste's oppression. Such a process has brought fierce social conflicts, which are manifested in attacks and counter-attacks between the upper and lower castes. Land reforms, political awakening and assertion of dalit identity have led to clashes which have underlying conflicting economic and political interests.

The caste alliances, seen in Bihar are quite unique. Seeking social justice and empowerment is the main reason for the backward castes alliances. Clearly there is a mobilization of caste and community on this
basis in all possible social and political situations. It seems that the whole society is divided in terms of these new combinations of caste and communities. The new generations of young men and women today look at their own existence and of others in terms of these divisions.

Hence, we can say that caste thus becoming a discrete entity at the level of individual, family and groups. Its use and misuse for reasons which have had no connection whatsoever with inter caste relations; inter caste ties, rituals, connubiality and commensality are common features of the functioning of the caste system.

Castes in the society inheres class and vice versa. Class also inhere power and latter reflects role of caste in its structure as well as in its functioning. Thus, caste increasingly is a matter of interpretation and discrete use. If caste refers to purposive rationality, it is no more an organic system. It can be seen more than an organic system which is reflected in an outburst by way of killing, torture, violence etc. Caste is loosing its cultural ambience and, is becoming more a state of mind and a resilient institution. There is an increasing delegitimisation of the traditional caste ideology and its pollution-purity syndrome.

Taking all these into consideration, there are two main reasons for undertaking this study. The first is that the area under the proposed study has been hardly been explored by social scientists, though this region has been socially and politically active and newsworthy for a long
time. This region is close to capital city of Patna and the proximity too increases its vulnerability to politicization. In the past, Buxar and Bhojpur have witnessed mobilization of peasants under the leadership of Jaiaprakash Narayan and during 1970s; several people actively participated in his ‘total-revolution-movement’. Secondly, studies of nexus between national, regional, district and local institutions and political parties have not received much attention of the scholars of the subject. This study aims at the understanding and analysis of the presence and functioning of these agencies and their support base in the related villages.

Under the leadership of CPI (ML), Indian peoples front (IPF), Bihar Pradesh kisan sangram samiti (BPKS) and Chatra Yuva Sanghars Vahini (CYSV), upper castes areas of Buxar district have experienced intense mobilization of the rural people. Since, the middle castes (yadav, kurmi and koeri) have claimed a greater share in power politics, jobs and educational institutions, a new pattern of social stratification has emerged. Such a situation has created a clear shift in the traditional patterns. To a large extent, political consciousness among the village people has resulted from political mobilization by various political parties. Factions formed on the basis of caste, have created interest groups even within the parties and across them. Factions at the village
level, affects deeply the patterns of interactions and relationships among the villagers.

Political and economic interpretation of caste is a historical reality. Ramification of caste and power could be seen in caste hierarchy. Polarity between caste and class or caste and power would not stand the test of history. Caste, class and power nexus and its continuity and change characterizes India's social formation. Therefore, there an increasing needs to study caste in terms of inequality and social justice with added emphasis on processes, rather than on static nature of caste. Caste conflicts have resulted into new power blocs and alliances as well as strategy for having access for power, authority, jobs and positions of high status. Such alliances are clearly reflected in the new paradigm which, spell out the terms of forwards, backwards, the poor, and the deprived. The new classifications particularly in the context of Bihar refer the transformation of caste groups into social categories. Such a classification replaces the traditional hierarchization. This indicates polarization of socio-economic and cultural inequalities and the increasing need for mobilization to bring about the social justice and empowerment of the underprivileged sections of the society.

In rural Bihar, caste provided structural and ideological bases for political mobilization. In course of the time, the result was that caste acquired economic and political dimensions. The impact of the
democratic process was however, not felt equally in different aspects of the caste system. It was selective. It was felt more in the power structure, in distribution of economic benefits, and in the development of caste consciousness.³

Unlike other states, Bihar has seen two struggles: (1) political struggle for control of the state by the forward castes against backward caste and (2) a socio-economic struggle of the landless lower castes and classes. The growing presence of backward castes among the state leaders added another element to factional politics, and this further crystallized the divide between the forward caste and backward castes. The older identities become weak, due to growing awareness and democratization of politics. Karpoori Thakur's election as chief minister of Bihar opened a new era in state's politics. He revitalized the issue of reservation for backward castes, showing the way to other leaders to consolidate their respective caste based vote banks. The backward caste commission of 1955 recommended 33 percent reservation for backward castes. But due to stiff resistance by the upper castes in Thakur's government only 25 percent reservation could be implemented. This created a sort of enemity between the upper caste and other backward castes. The upper castes saw the end of their domination and political power if backward castes succeeded in capturing village panchayats. In

this period there were numerous smaller and big clashes in the rural areas between upper and the backward castes. These clashes had a great influence on the social interactional patterns of different caste groups in rural Bihar.

**Review of Literature**

Rural studies have tended to be holistic and general in nature. These studies treat rural life as organic whole and different aspects of contemporary rural society, such as caste, religion, beliefs, leadership, and life, are treated as functionally interdependent. These studies usually lack an evolutionary perspective; as such they do not throw light on the patterns of conflicts and social mobility in rural India.

Rural sociology in association with social cultural anthropology has culminated into a series of village studies beginning with M.N. Srinivas's study of village Rampura in Mysore State, followed by another of Samirpet village by S.C. Dubey. Two edited books on single village study by different scholars followed these landmark studies. The first book was edited by McKim Marriot and the second was by M.N. Srinivas himself. Some other significant works conducted during the

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4 M.N. Srinivas, Religion and society among the Coorgs of south India, Oxford University press, 1952.
7 M.N. Srinivas, India's Villages (eds), Asia Publishing House, 1960
late 1950s and 60s were by F.G. Bailey\textsuperscript{8}, Andre Betelle\textsuperscript{9}, Alan Beals\textsuperscript{10}, B.R. Chauhan\textsuperscript{11} and Anand Chakravarti.\textsuperscript{12} The two other significant studies were by Adrian C. Mayer\textsuperscript{13} and T.S. Epstein.\textsuperscript{14} The studies of villages taken up by Slater\textsuperscript{15} and Mann\textsuperscript{16} were prompted by the changing political situation and these studies played a significant part in shifting the orientation of agrarian studies.

The village studies in post independence period were related to the caste in local communities in contra-distinction to earlier economic studies of tribal cultures by social anthropologists. There were studies based on particular castes at the local and regional levels. Betteille pointed out that, many anthropologists today readily concede that the preoccupation with caste has led to a number of biases and distortions in the picture of the village India that has emerged out of their studies.\textsuperscript{17}

The usual village studies concerned with a description of different castes, their numerical strength, hierarchy and conflict among different castes, their numerical strength, hierarchy and conflict among different

\textsuperscript{8} F.G Bailey, caste and economic frontiers; a village in Highland Orrisa, Oxford university press, Bombay, 1958.
\textsuperscript{10} Alan Beals, Gopalpur: A south Indian village, Holt, Rinehart & Winston inc. New Delhi. 1962.,
\textsuperscript{11} B.R. Chouhan, A Rajasthan village, Associated Publishing House, New Delhi, 1967.
\textsuperscript{12} Anand Chakravarti, Contradiction and change: Changing Patterns of Authority in a Rajasthan village, Oxford University press, Delhi, 1975.
\textsuperscript{13} Adrian Mayar, Caste and kinship in central India: A village and its region, Berkley, 1960.
\textsuperscript{14} T.S. Epstein, Economic development and social change, Manchester University press, Manchester, 1962.
\textsuperscript{15} Gilbert Slater, (eds), Economic studies; Some south Indian villages, volumes1, Oxford university press, 1918.
\textsuperscript{16} H.H. Mann, Land and Labour in Deccan village 2 volumes, university of Bombay economic series, Bombay, 1917-1921.
\textsuperscript{17} Andre Betelle, Studies in agrarian and social structure, oxford university press, Delhi, 1974.
caste group, marriage relations, village power structure, and family types of different castes. From 1950s onward, a number of village studies came out significant among these are Majumdars's, Lewis's, Mayer's, and Majumdar's studies on Indian villages. As these studies are basically caste based, they did not focus much about the political orientations of the village people.

The villager's outlook and perceptions about the political system are not dealt properly in any of the above mentioned studies. They did not search the questions as to what are the factors that affect the rural masses while voting for a party or candidate.

Dominant caste which proved useful to some extent in interpreting social reality is more indigenous term, but caste is one of the factors which were responsible for the stratification of the village society. To consider caste as the unit of social interaction and to explain the productive organization of the village only in terms of land owning and landless caste or power structure in terms of dominant caste etc, tend to produce biases in analyzing the total structure and system of interrelation of the village society. Though, the caste oriented studies in the last three to four decades have improved our knowledge and

20 D.N. Majumdar caste and communication in an Indian village, Asia publishing house, Bombay, 1958.
understanding of caste, they have caused an unfortunate neglect of the necessity of viewing the village from other perspective, especially in terms of categories like interest group, political associations, political caste groups and political classes etc.

The post-independent era saw the old solidarity among different castes and classes as being weakening and the factional relationship has been undergoing reorientation. A new type of inter-caste relationship is taking shape in the villages, in which old attitudes are being slowly transformed and each caste group in villages are trying their best to preserve and enhance their own identity and status.

The caste or sub caste or community is the core of the traditional politics. Caste is one of the most important variables that help in understanding the social networks of the rural people. For this reason, the caste can not easily be assimilated within the fold of modern politics. Caste contributes to social cohesion, organizing the parts into the maintenance of the whole village community. Coherence is maintained or restored by the preservation of the status acquired by the virtue of belonging to a particular caste\textsuperscript{23}. Caste and politics mutually influence

each other and these factors determines the extent to which political power is generated and distributed in rural society\textsuperscript{24}.

Although caste and its ramification have been undergoing slow erosion as a result of improved literacy level, improved communication, community development programmes, constitutional provisions for weaker section and emergence of new political parties, yet caste gamut retain its hold on politics and society\textsuperscript{25}.

Dubey\textsuperscript{26} in his paper, "caste domination and factionalism", takes note of mutual influence of caste and politics on one another. Taking these two factors in combination with one another, he tried to get an idea of the extent in which political power is generated and distributed in society.

Singh\textsuperscript{27} tried to show the power structure in village community is responsible for bringing the changes that are taking place in caste consciousness of the numerically dominant castes. He emphasized more on the issue of political process. He writes that zamindari system, caste organization and village panchayats are the three levels of power structure and it did not enjoy a state of insularity or independence but a status of relative dependence, adjustment and symbiosis.

\textsuperscript{24} I.P Desai, and R.K Hebsur, "caste and politics" economic and political weekly, 11(9), may 8, 1976.
\textsuperscript{25} Andre Beteille, caste, class and power, Oxford University press, Bombay, 1965.
\textsuperscript{26} S.C. Dube, caste, Domination and factionalism, Contribution to Indian sociology, 11, New series, December, 1968.
\textsuperscript{27} Yogendra Singh, "The changing power structure of village community, a case study of six villages of eastern U.P." in Desai, A.R.(eds), Rural sociology in India, Popular Prakasan, Bombay, 1959.
Srinivas\textsuperscript{28} has given the notion of dominant caste which in post-independent India mobilized and used by political parties. These castes are much more politically superior because of their numerical strength and economic power. He writes that caste system in India seems to have developed a quality of adapting itself to the modern changes. And the resultant new political forms are more responsive to it.

Yogendra Singh\textsuperscript{29} opines that traditional social structure was differentiated by the major role in the factors like land reforms, urbanization, industrialization, and recruitment in elite services and the creation of the new institutions like panchayati raj, parliamentary party system, community development programmes, democratic elections, decentralization of political power at the village level.

The two studies done by K.L. Sharma\textsuperscript{30,31} reveals several facts about rural power structure. He maintains that the local communities which witnessed or are witnessing the swift changes, are due to the aspirations to get political powers in elections, are trying their best to achieve it. Further, the study examines the different modes of powers of rural elites and mobility among them and maintains that modern rural elites are the products of the post independent development such as

\textsuperscript{28} M.N Srinivas, Caste in modern India, Asia publishing house, Bombay, 1962.
\textsuperscript{29} Yogendra, Singh, Caste and class: some aspects of continuity and change, sociological bulletin\textsuperscript{17} (1), 1968.
\textsuperscript{30} K.L Sharma, Social structure and political change, Political science review, 8(1), January-March, 1969.
\textsuperscript{31} K.L Sharma, Rural society in India, Rawat publishers, Jaipur, 1997.
adult franchise, panchayati raj, abolition of zamindari, spread of education and means of communication.

Betellie\textsuperscript{32} has analyzed the process of changes in the power structure of rural communities. In this regard Desai and Hebsur\textsuperscript{33} after conducting field investigation concluded that caste and politics are influenced by each other. Kothari\textsuperscript{34} argues that after the introduction of parliamentary democracy and electoral process in free India, there are considerable upward mobility among the lower castes. He also argues that the nature of caste alliances has changed due to the above factors. He also recognized that the numerically preponderant other backward castes and classes are now asserting for the power structure.

Iqbal\textsuperscript{35} maintains that caste leaders are now converted into new political leaders and it has created a new leadership based on economic and political considerations instead of merely caste considerations. K.L. Sharma\textsuperscript{36} has observed that land reform has not resulted in desired changes in rural social structure. It is in fact, a mere transformation of earlier land relations and inequalities. The abolition of zamindari has brought the transfer of landholdings from one group to another. The

\textsuperscript{32} Andre Betellie "Caste, Class and power, oxford university press, 1945.
\textsuperscript{34} Rajni Kothari, Politics in India, Little brown, 1970.
\textsuperscript{35} Iqbal Narian, "politics and panchayati raj" Indian journal of political science, 23(4), October-december, 1962.
\textsuperscript{36} K.L Sharma, Land tenure system, social structure and change, sociological perspectives of land reforms (eds), Lal, Sheokumar, 1982.
technological devices have further consolidated the traditional inequalities. Due to this, political power has shifted from one group of people to another despite change of land ownership.

Y. Singh\textsuperscript{37} summarized significant trends in agrarian class structure. The existing land reforms have initiated a process by which the security and economic prosperity of the rich peasantry has increased, but the conditions of small peasants both, in respects of economic level and tenurial stability, has deteriorated. Thus, a class of neo-rich stratum of peasantry has come into being, who are not necessarily from the ex-zamindars category. Betellie\textsuperscript{38} noted in his study that, power now has become independent of class to a greater extent than it was in the past. Ownership of land is no longer the decisive factor in acquiring power. Hiramani\textsuperscript{39} has pointed out that the distribution of power and authority in the villages studied by him does not show any correlation with the landholdings and caste.

Oommen\textsuperscript{40} writes that there are two ways to get in position of power and authority in the village community. One is through one's quality and manipulative tactics and second, is through his/her wealth like landholding, property, elite class position and other family

\textsuperscript{37} Yogendra Singh, Concepts And theories of social change, A trend report in a survey of research in sociology and social anthropology, Volume I, Popular prakasan, Bombay.

\textsuperscript{38} Andre Betellie, Caste class and Power: changes patterns of stratification in a Tanjore village, university of California press, Berkley, 1967.

\textsuperscript{39} A.P Hiramani, Social change in rural India, B.R publishing house, Delhi, 1977.

\textsuperscript{40} T.K. Oommen, Political leadership in rural India: Images and realities, Asian Survey, 9(7).
connections. Gough\textsuperscript{41} identifies the poor peasants and agricultural labourers as having the potential for organizing revolutionary movements in India. Dhanagare\textsuperscript{42} also takes the similar position while, arguing that peasant movement forms an overwhelming large section of the rural society and has also demonstrated their transformative potential from time to time. Kapil Kumar's\textsuperscript{43} study shows that the poor rural masses and poor peasants played a significant role in the movements against zamindars.

Swasti Miller\textsuperscript{44} observes that in west Bengal the power structure based on the concentration of the landholdings is on the wane, giving to a broad-based middle peasant economy. Hence, conflicts between middle peasants and agricultural labourers have come to the fore. In his recent writing Rajni Kothari\textsuperscript{45} analyzes the association of caste and politics by arguing that democracy in India has become a playground for growing corruption, criminalization, repression and intimidation of large masses of people. The role of the state in social transformation has been undermined. People have started asserting their rights through various struggles.

\textsuperscript{41} Kathelln Gough, Indian peasants uprising, EPW9(32-34), Special number, August, 1974.
\textsuperscript{42} D.N. Dhanagare, Peasant movements in India, 1920-1950, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1983.
\textsuperscript{43} Kapil Kumar, Congress and then raj in Oudh, Manohar publishers, Delhi, 1984.
\textsuperscript{44} Swasti Miller, Peasant movement in west Bengal, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, 1977.
\textsuperscript{45} Rajni Kothari, The non party political process, EPW, 19(5), February, 1984.
Lieten\textsuperscript{46} argues that every caste, sub castes and religious communities contributed its own share to both bourgeois-land lords as well as to the proletarian- semi proletarian peasant classes. In his view, class society was thus emerging within the very frameworks of an essentially caste society.

Mukherjee\textsuperscript{47} writes that caste riots are frequent in those parts of India where the caste-wise social deprivation are manifested in correlation with the class-wise economic deprivation such as Bihar, Maharastra, T.N, etc. He tried to show how the caste riots can be equated with class conflict.

Sachidananda\textsuperscript{48} argues that, since caste and democracy are social realities in India, the impact of democratic process was not felt equally on all aspects of the caste system. It was particularly felt in power structure, in distribution of economic rewards and in development of caste consciousness.\textsuperscript{49} Rudolph and Rudolph\textsuperscript{49} while writing on Indian caste associations argues that Indian caste associations is no longer in the hands of those qualified by heredity-the senior or more able members of lineage groups which traditionally supplied village sub caste leadership. The availability of association leaders is conditioned by their

\textsuperscript{46}Kristoffel, Georges Lieten, Caste in class politics, EPW, January 24, 1981.

\textsuperscript{47} Ramkishna Mukherjee, Realities of Agrarian relations in India, EPW, January 24, 1981.

\textsuperscript{48} Sachidananda, Social change in India, concept publishing house, New Delhi, 1988.

\textsuperscript{49} Rudolph Lyoyd Land Susane Hoeber Rudolph, The political role of India's Caste associations, Pecipic affairs, 33, no. 1, 1960.
ability to articulate and represent the purpose of the caste associations. And, for this purpose they must be literate in the ways of the new democratic politics.

The studies which dealt with the varied roles of castes and kinship factors in decision making process in rural India include Dhillon50 and Lewis’s51 works. Hitchcock52 in his study of leadership in a north Indian village held that, caste as a basis of leadership has been continuing. Though among lower caste there is growing awareness of the needs for economic reforms. Secondly, he finds present caste leaders to be more educated and development oriented in their outlook.

MSA Rao53 notes that the backward caste movements are asserting for a higher status in rural heartland. However, any collective endeavour to bring about collective transformation and change in the labour and property relationship and the struggle for justice involves capturing or influencing political authority. Though, it may not be an immediate agenda. Ranjit, Guha54 observed that insurgency was a motivated and conscious undertaking on the part of the rural masses.

50 H.S Dhillon, Leadership and groups in a south Indian village, Planning commission, new Delhi,1955.
53 M.S.A Rao,.,Social movements in India, volumeland 2,.Manohar publications ,Delhi. 1978
54 Ranjit Guha, Elementary Aspects of peasants insurgency in colonial India, oxford university press, New Delhi,1983.
Cohn 55 analyses the external factors which brought changes in inter-caste and intra-caste relation in the villages. He studied extensively on Chamar caste in a village. Dumont 56 writes that village community is primarily a political society. It is a body of co-owners of soil and emblems of traditional economy and polity.

Bhattacharya 57 examines the linkages between caste, class and politics in a West Bengal village of Bardwan district. He came to the conclusion that radical changes in the political process have not been able to establish the hegemony of the rural proletariat in the politics of the village. Krisna Rao 58 maintains that, largely the rural conflict between the so called higher caste and depressed castes is rooted in the landholding patterns. According to him, economic equality may gradually lead to social equality but this is being resisted by the forces in the rural society at places. Saxena 59 after studying four villages of Rajasthan concludes that, neither technological changes nor government sponsored programmes of land reforms have significantly altered the economic situation of the weakest sections in rural India. The landless labourers

55 Bernad S. cohn, “the changing status of a depressed caste in Mckim Marriot (ed) Village India, Chicago University press.
57 Sukant Bhattacharya, Caste, class and politics in West Bengal, EPW, January 18, 2003.
58 Y.V. Krisna Rao, Agrarian struggles and the change in power structure in the countryside, in Ashish Ghosh(eds), Dalits and peasants- The emerging caste-class Dynamics, Gyan sagar publications, New Delhi, 1999.
and tenants as well as people of lower caste continue to suffer from economic inequalities. Mishra\textsuperscript{60} after studying four villages from U.P. in Akbarpur Tehsil concludes that, the nature of conflict characterizing the different castes in the villages has grown out of their life style woven around the scarce social values like power, prestige, influence and resources.

Saxena\textsuperscript{61} asserts that the traditional unity of caste has not given place to the unity of class. He says that the vertical unity of castes have undergone a change. Atal\textsuperscript{62} examined the structure of the caste in the context of village organization with a comparative orientation. He writes that, changes in the frontiers of castes in the two studied villages from Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh reveals that, the basic attributes either of the unit or of the system has not undergone any radical change. Changes that have occurred in some cases are largely peripheral. Saguthan\textsuperscript{63} advocates that, the current backward classes’ movements including the movements of SCs are actually catalyzing the democratization and secularization of our society.

\textsuperscript{60} Ram Bali Mishra, Caste and caste conflict in rural society, Commonwealth publishers, New Delhi, 1989.
\textsuperscript{61} H.S. Saxena, Op.Cit.
\textsuperscript{62} Yogesh Atal, The changing frontiers of castes, National publishers, Delhi, 1968.
\textsuperscript{63} Saguthan R., Backward classes movement and questions of democracy, in Ghosh, Asish (eds) Dalits and Peasants: Caste – Class Dynamics, Gyan Sagar publication, New Delhi, 1999.
Studies on Bihar

Prasad\(^4\) surveyed over 2000 households in a couple of villages in Purnia, Sahersha and Monghyr districts of Bihar. He argues that, the character of the social formation of rural Bihar is predominantly semi-feudal. He lists four prominent features of semi-feudalism; described as sharecropping, perpetual indebtedness of small tenants and concentration of two modes of exploitations namely usury and landlordism in the hands of the same economic class and the lack of the accessibility to the market for small tenants.

Hetukar Jha\(^5\) observes that, it was economic and social oppression rather than economic prosperity that was the primary force behind the process of caste sanskritisation. Verma\(^6\) and Dhar\(^7\) have discussed the relationship between caste and political process in Bihar. These studies, by discussing caste relations to other phenomenon like modernization, economic and political social oppression, social mobility, protection of economic gains and political processes have pointed out that the caste is still a significant phenomenon in rural Bihar.

\(^6\) Ravindra kumar Verma, caste and Bihar politics, EPW, Volume16, Number18, 4May, 1991
\(^7\) Hiranmay Dhar., Caste and polity in bihar in ombvdt, Gail(eds), Land caste and politics in Indian state , Authors guild publications, New Delhi.
Pradhan H. Prasad\textsuperscript{68} notes that the organized movements by rural poor in some parts of the rural Bihar were, to some extent successful in mounting pressure on landlords and rich peasantry. Mishra\textsuperscript{69} writes that in rural Bihar, the voter's orientations towards elections are primarily in terms of his identification with primary groups like caste and religion. Identification with the secondary associations like economy, class, ideology or political parties are of secondary importance.

Blair\textsuperscript{70} writes that in Bihar the largest landowners, including Darbhanga raj, the Hathwa raj, the Dumrao raj and the Ramgarh raj etc. have managed to save large portion of land at the time of land ceiling. He collected data from national sample survey as well as local village studies collected in the 1960s and 1970s suggested that the practice of leasing out land to bataidars had become widespread. This also gave birth to discontentment among the rural poors of Bihar. The break-up of old oppressive feudal order and especially land redistribution, whether through legislative measure or through mass actions has brought about many changes in rural society. These changes redistributed economic power and gave rise to new social and political norms and behaviors. Elections to gram panchayats and other tiers of local government have

\textsuperscript{68} Pradhan Prasad, H., "Agrarian Unrest and economic change in rural Bihar, EPW, 10(24), 1975.
\textsuperscript{69} S.N Mishra,., Political socialization in India(social and leadership patterns in a bihar gram panchayat), inter India publication, New Delhi.
also enabled the rural masses to develop a consciousness of their numerical strength and wherever this has asserted itself, they have been able to secure a considerable share in the power structure.

Roy\textsuperscript{71} explores the relation between caste and political recruitment in case of Bihar Pradesh Congress Committee (BPCC). He also explains the nature of stratification in Bihar and its implication for political system. Singh\textsuperscript{72} writings about caste politics emphasized on three caste alignments (1) The Rajput-Bhumihar domination (2) the backward caste domination (3) all caste domination.

Jha\textsuperscript{73} held the view that the caste groups have indeed became more cohesive with the erstwhile support groups having separate identities to compete with the core group for sharing power. He also asserts that there is interplay of the caste and politics in Bihar. As evident in alignments of different caste groups, the association cannot be explained fully in terms of the coincidence of rituals, social, and economic benefits.

Sachchidananda\textsuperscript{74} writes that numerical strength does not necessarily make the caste to become a dominant caste, because each caste is usually divided into privileged and not so privileged section and

\textsuperscript{71} Ramashray Roy., Caste and political recruitment in Bihar in kothari, Rajni(eds), caste in Indian politics, Little Brown , Boston.
\textsuperscript{72} N.K Singh many faces of caste politics, E P W, April, 1972.
\textsuperscript{73} Shree Nagesh Jha, Caste in Bihar politics E P W, February,14, 1970.
\textsuperscript{74} Sacchidananda, Social change in India, Concept publishing company, New Delhi, 1988.
also into irreconcilable factions whose feuds are legion. Writing on rural Bihar he confirms that group's dynamics and power alignments in village community can better be understood by studying key individuals in different factions. He asserts that, of course caste is an important factor in village politics the network of inter-group power alignment draws diverse elements into it. The inter caste relationships which exists in the villages is due to the fact that different castes threat the prestige of others. This threat is perceived enormously by upper caste over lower castes due to their inherent superiority since tradition. Frankel writes that in Bihar there is a broad correspondence between the hierarchies of caste, class and power as the caste which is essentially powerful exerts considerable influence on politics.

Lal talking about Bihar politics writes that, Bihar is the land of many paradoxes; extreme poverty side by side with plenty, literacy with widespread illiteracy and so on. The political renaissance in recent years leading to profound alteration in its power structure is a reflection of a silent reaction by the masses to the mediational equilibrium of upper caste political exploitation.

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Blair\textsuperscript{78} writes that since 1967 two new developments took place. The first one, represented a coalescence of the slow unfolding agricultural transformation and second, more rapidly moving movements of backwards in a politically conscious force of Bihar. He writes further that, caste and politics in Bihar is so close in fact to mention one has been almost automatically to speak of the other.

Prasad\textsuperscript{79} writing on Bihar politics says that caste no more prescribes for ritual distance but it has gained importance in the matter of political mobilization as well as in the matters of political empowerment. It has been the most important mobilizing factor in politics. Gordon White\textsuperscript{80} writes that in Bihar, uncivil entities like criminals along with primordial nationalist ethnic or religious fundamental organizations exercise greater say than modern entities such as trade unions, chamber of commerce and professional organizations.

Das's\textsuperscript{81} writing on land ownership asserts that the land ownership is related with dominance and power structure. Chakraverti\textsuperscript{82} analyzed the significance of caste for exploring a person’s location in agrarian

\textsuperscript{79}R.C. Prasad, Political Transition in Bihar, Magadh University Survey Research.
\textsuperscript{81}Arivend Narayan Das, “Still Paying Old Debts” The Telegraph, 6 June, 1997, Calcutta.
\textsuperscript{82}Anand Chakraverti, Caste and Agrarian Class., A View From Bihar, EPW. April, 28, 2001.
class structure in contemporary Bihar. He examined a range of factors and concludes that, both the traditional and new dominant castes have privileged access to material and political resources and constitute the dominant class. As a consequence, those who belong to the depressed social groups are denied access to such resources. Choudhary's writing about agrarian unrest in Patna district, pointed to the irrelevance of caste. According to him the caste structure is breaking up. He tried to understand the class dimension by stating that the struggle was between landless poor peasants and middle peasants on one hand and landlords on the other.

Prasad attributed the agrarian violence in Bihar to the contradiction between the 'ritual oligarchy' and 'direct producers'. The former comprises mainly large landlords and latter includes marginal landholders. Naxalite led peasant movements in rural Bihar have been studied by Das, Mukherjee and Yadav, Mukherjee, Pradhan

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84 Pradhan Prasad, H. Caste and Class in Bihar, EPW, 14(7 & 8), Annual number.
86 Kalyan Mukherjee and Rajendra Yadav, Bhojpur: Naxalism in the plains of Bihar, Radha Krishna prakasan, New Delhi, 1980.
87 Kalyan Mukherjee, Peasant revolution in Bhojpur, EPW, volume 14, number 36, 8th September, 1979.
Prasad\textsuperscript{88}, Mundle\textsuperscript{89}, Sinha\textsuperscript{90}, Upadhyay\textsuperscript{91} have also analyzed in details caste and caste conflicts in Bihar.

By and large the previous studies ignored the hidden bases of Bihar politics in general. The study of politics and society will remain superficial, without understanding the politics of the general masses. The study of mass mobilization is important in the present political context, when political changes in India are rapid and frequent. We have yet to make efforts in analyzing the socio-economic and political situation obtaining at the point in time when a mobilization is likely to take place in a particular society.

It is thus, clear from the brief review of literature of the above studies that no study has exclusively focused on the nature and dynamics of the politics at the smallest unit of administration i.e. village. This study also encompasses the ways and means by which the villagers are mobilized along the caste lines. Most of the studies are either related to the general conditions of the villages and their patterns of interactions or the impact of the governmental policies on their socio-economic conditions. A few studies have evaluated the functions of the caste system and the impacts of the land reforms.

\textsuperscript{88} Pradhan Prasad, H, Agrarian unrest and economic change in rural Bihar, Three case studies, EPW, volume10, number24, 14\textsuperscript{th} June 1975.
\textsuperscript{89} Sudipto Mundle, Notes from a Palamau village, Mainstream, volume16, number28, 11\textsuperscript{th} March, 1979.
\textsuperscript{90} Arun Sinha, Class War not atrocities against Harijans, EPW, volume12, number28, 10\textsuperscript{th} December 1977.
\textsuperscript{91} Brij Kumar Upadhyay, Socio-Economic roots of rural violence in Bihar, Teaching politics, volume14, Number2, New Delhi. 1988.
Many of the studies of politics of rural Bihar and mobilization of the rural poor in recent times have not studied the new developments adequately, e.g. their change of strategy from arms to elections and full use of constitutional means. The number of struggles launched by the poor and oppressed has increased in the last three to four decades in the Central Bihar. There has been a change in the strategy of mobilization of the rural poor. This shift has not been adequately studied in the above works on Bihar.

The present study evaluates the nature of politics with an integrated view. This study is a modest attempt to analyse the role played by the contemporary leaders in giving the shape and direction to the different types of movements and the assertion of the deprived castes and village poor. It also studies the present day polity and the political system and processes at the village level. This study has tried to examine caste as a system of social segmentation and integration. This study is an attempt to do an in-depth and systematic study of the village politics in Central Bihar.

The Hypothesis of the study

- Shifting of power from one caste of people to another is independent of the transfer of land.
The socio-economic inequalities and the caste consciousness of the people are likely to result in caste conflicts/social conflicts between lower and upper castes.

The other backward castes are asserting the power due to their numerical strength and due to political mobilization.

**Objective of the study**

Caste is no more an aspect of ritual purity. It has lost its organic character. Inter-caste relations and intra-caste ties have nearly disappeared. The weakening of jajmani system and biradari as institution controlling behaviour of its member has emboldened the dependent castes and communities as they feel emancipated from these subjugating mechanisms. However, caste persists in a new form as a phenomenon relating to socio-cultural consciousness, as a resource and infrastructure having discrete mobilizations. To study such a situation one has to go into the functioning of the caste system before the emergence of the new alliances and than relate the same to the present scenario.

The purpose of the present study is to understand caste, class and power, resultant encounters and conflicts in general in Indian Society and rural Bihar in particular. Besides the study of inequality, difference and discrimination, our emphasis is on the understanding of the use of
caste identity and caste-based mobilizations for economic and political gains.

The purpose is not to reduce caste to class and vice-versa. We find it more important to study caste-class nexus, its continuity and change and how caste conflicts are also class conflicts or struggle for power.

In rural Bihar, caste provided structural and ideological bases for political mobilization. It had a built-in-segmental organization and it also gave an identity and consciousness to the caste groups. In course of time, intra and inter caste competition and rivalry created factionalism and fierce struggle for power. The traditional dominant castes were not stronger enough and the power seeking middle castes made claims to positions of power and authority. The democratization of politics at the grass roots level opened up opportunities for the numerically dominant backward and deprived castes, in rural Bihar to have access to political power.

Thus, in rural Bihar, the new political alliances and combinations are affecting the traditional caste-based structure and inter caste relations. Another impact of the new political milieu is the rise in the status of many lower castes in general. However, intra caste social stratification has increased due to differentiated levels of mobility in a given caste. Individual, family and even a small sub-group within different castes have become units of status determination rather caste group as a
whole. The significance of the above mentioned phenomenon affects the people at the grassroots level are discussed in this study as;

- How these people in rural Bihar have been socially, politically and economically affected by these interventions. How society in general is being affected by these developments and how people reflect and respond to class/caste conflicts in Bihar.

These and some other questions will be enquired based on our field study and available source materials. In addition, some other objectives will be as follows:

- How factions formed in the villages affect the people in general.
- How political parties spread their ideologies up to the village level.
- To understand inequality, differences and discrimination.
- How caste inequalities are being used for political mobilization and economic gains.
- To examine the changing pattern of land holdings after the enactment of various land reform acts at all the three levels viz. country, state and the village.
- To analyze the new nature of power holders in villages.

**Methodology:**

Preliminary information of all the households, the size of the family, and the type of houses were collected after the observation of the
study area. The collected information was further verified from various sources, which mainly account for the panchayat office, block office and district of the two villages. The information was secured on the following items to get a proper perspective of the two villages. It was decided to draw 200 households from both the villages. In order to see that all the castes in the village are represented in the sample, a rough list of all the families according to their castes was made. Apart from that a list of the following items were made.

- List of land owners.
- List of land possession with each household.
- List of the other professionals.
- List of the last election and who voted whom and what were the factors which motivated them to vote for a particular party or candidate.

Case studies of a number of institution and events were made, which were of specific interest. The innovations, the new institutions and specific events were analyzed on the basis of the case studies. On the basis of the above information an interview schedule was prepared to get information from the respondents of the sampled household. The head of the households were chosen as respondents in the sample and they were interviewed with an interview schedule. The interview schedule contained questions on occupation, caste ranking, caste and caste
consciousness, education, political orientations, power structure, land possession and type of cultivation done. The questions on these aspects were aimed at understanding the attitude, values, and aspirations of the village people.

The interview schedule was also prepared for gathering information about historical events, caste rivalries, caste panchayats, village panchayats, and other matters. These information's provided among other details a general picture of the two villages understanding. Group discussions threw lights on items of solidarities or conflicts in the villages giving rise to political affiliations and/or factions. The family schedule was prepared to cover age, marital status, relations to the head of the family, education and earning of the each resident of the households. The data collected through all these sources was tabulated and analyzed on the basis of variables of caste class, income, education, occupation, power.

**Theoretical Orientation**

Political cleavages and alignments in the villages have to be considered not only in relation to other features of the social structures, but also in terms of division and tensions in the regional society. In this sense the villages as a unit of study may be regarded as a point at which forces operating over a much wider field converge and intersect.
Fortunately some knowledge of the articulation of different political levels with each other is made possible by the existence of certain institutions and organizations operating at various levels.

Politics have got involved with the traditional structure and its leadership. It is the caste system which made available to the leadership structure as ideological base for political mobilization providing it with both a segmental organization and its identification system on which support could be crystallized. Three aspects of caste-secular, integration and consciousness have been interpreted in which secular consists of the governmental and political aspects. The former includes caste councils, arbitration procedures and so on, as latter relates with the authority of caste, inter-caste status alignments and cleavages. There is the integration aspect in which the caste systems not only determines the individual's social status on the basis of the group to which he is born but also differentiates and assign occupational and economic roles. It thus gives a place to every individual from the highest to the lowest and makes for a high degree of identification and integration.92

The power elites of different castes are the dominant figure in the politics of the village panchayats and political parties. Political bosses are the mainstream of the agrarian lobbies and other pressure groups like traditional village panchayats, caste associations, peasant organizations

92 Rajni Kothari, Caste in Indian Politics, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1970.
etc. In rural society, politics plays a vital role in forming various pressure groups particularly peasant unions. Caste in India has been employed as a factor in achieving political power. One consequence of this process is the growth of competition and conflict between different castes and communities. The context of politics in India is determined by caste structure.\textsuperscript{93}Since politics protects the caste interests, caste factor in politics has been solidified irrespective of its growing confrontational and competitive role. Politics has become reflection of caste and religious loyalties. The role of caste is not confined to election alone it is extended to the actual operation of the state apparatus. The penetration of caste in politics has made the state apparatus biased in favour of some castes. The role of caste in Indian politics has distorted the process of democratisation.

Unlike Marxist, the central focus of functionalist argument is that politics cannot ignore caste but it will transform caste towards secular social category. The Marxist make a distinction between appearance and reality and between observable social facts and the real factors which lie behind the given social facts and categories of social relations. Caste is employed to play an ideological role in politics to legitimize capitalist exploitation. The democratic political process in India is linked with the

\textsuperscript{93} C.P. Bhambari "caste and politics in India" in K.L. Sharma (Eds) Social Stratification in India, Rawat publication New Delhi, 1986.
building of capitalism and the conflicts generated by the capitalist path of development and diverted towards caste confrontations. Caste is projected as reality of Indian society. Land owners belonging to the upper and middle castes employ the state apparatus to extract surplus value by oppressing the landless agricultural labourers and exploitative agrarian relations and defended with the help of the state functionaries. The basic activity of social exploitation is undertaken by rural rich by means of caste factors in politics.

Indian village consists of a complex hierarchical system with individuals, families and groups superimposed upon each other. Relations between these units are found in terms of caste gradation, money power, landownership, intellectual caliber and political power.94

The rural studies of the 1950s and 1960s were mainly socio- graphic to begin with and attempted to reconstruct rural social structure from a structural-functional perspective. The studies of Robert Redfield and McKim Marriot emphasized the cultural aspects of rural institutions and attempted to examine the linkages among various levels of traditions. Redfield’s notion of the ‘little community’ was also implicit in the conceptual framework of some contemporary studies. It directed the village studies to search for linkages with the larger totality of Indian

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social organization. These studies generated a tradition of intensive fieldwork, led to the precision of the use of the concepts and to operationalisation of concepts in the light of empirical observation. During this period the fashion was to conduct village studies from a descriptive-holistic perspective; but towards the end of the 1950s more analytical village studies began to be conducted. With the changing patterns of society, the villages are also changing rapidly. The villages are changing in respect of power structure, economic institutions and inter-caste relationships. The abolition of privileges and economic rights of the intermediaries like the zamindars and feudal, has though not succeeded in introducing an egalitarian class structure in the villages, yet it has made a great socio-psychological impact on ex-tenants groups and motivates them now for competition with traditional powerful groups for access to position of power and social status. The process coinciding with reforms of panchayats has transformed the structure of village leadership. Village leadership has now increasingly become more conciliatory and pragmatic in orientation.

Beteille writes that although relations between the different classes have been undergoing change in the distribution of power. The landownership has shifted only in a small way from the old masters to

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95 Yogendra Singh, Indian Sociology (social conditioning and Emerging Concerns, Vistaa publications, New Delhi, 1997.
96 Yogendra Singh, Modernization of Indian Tradition, Rawat publication, New Delhi, 2001.
the emerging class of farmers and owner-cultivators. Power on the other hand, has shifted much more decisively from the traditional elite of the village into the hands of the new popular leaders. The powerful families in the past were the big landowning families. These included the principle Brahmin families. Today political power, whether in the village or outside it, is not as closely tied to ownership of land as it was in the past. New bases of power have emerged which are, to some extent, independent of both caste and class. Perhaps most important among these is the strength of numerical strength.97

The Indian villages were being studied by the scholars regarding the collection of intensive survey of landholding in the 18th century. The early studies came to the conclusion that the villages are closed social units. Some of the scholars name is Munro, Metcalfe, Maine, and Baden-Powell. In the year 1950s and onwards, sociologists presumed that the Indian villages are not static but are changing with the changed scenario. These assumptions were in the protest of the early presumption that the Indian villages are static. They also started realizing the fact that the villages are well connected with the outside world by means of several units.

97 Andre Beteille, caste, class and power, Berkely, university of California press. 1965.
Louis Dumont\textsuperscript{98} refers to the three meanings of the term "village community":

1) As a political society.
2) As a body of co-owners of the soil.
3) As the emblem of traditional economy and polity.

We can deduce from the above discussion that the village community has been seen as the integral part of the Indian polity and society. In the year of 1955 four important works on village life came namely, M.N. Srinivas India's Villages, S.C. Dubey's Indian Village, D.N. Majumdar's Rural Profiles and McKim Marriot's Village India.

In relations to caste with the village community Chauhan draws four lines of approaches:

1) One village and one caste.
2) One village and many castes.
3) One caste and many villages.
4) Many castes and many villages.

M.N. Srinivas pointed that the objective of study and nature of study would normally determine the method of study. He stressed on the fieldwork in sociological research. He noted several advantages of fieldwork. According to him, it refers to a different set of approach, methods and techniques compared with macro-surveys.

\textsuperscript{98} Louis Dumont, "The village from Munro to Maine" Contribution to Indian sociology, no.15. 1966
After analyzing 126 village studies, Dasgupta concluded that methodologically most of the studies applied 'multivariate' approach. According to him these studies included mainly three approaches: 1) interdisciplinary approach, 2) extensive coverage of data and 3) standard method of data collection based on a common research design.  

S.C. Dube advocates for the application of the Structural-functional approach for studying the Indian village. Citing the examples of the concepts of little and great traditions, sanskritisation, and universalisation and parochialisation he stresses that the structural-functional approach provide the sociologists and social researcher a good approach and best conceptual tools for the studies of village communities. The study conducted by Redfield folk-urban continuum provides one such conceptual framework. He writes that a good study of change invariably follows a good structural-functional approach. Ramakrishna Mukherjee used a combined or synthetic approach, which takes into account the socio-cultural as well as economic and other aspects of village life. Srinivas studied village solidarity, interdependence among castes, patron client relations, rule and role of dominant castes,

101 ibid.
102 ibid.
103 ibid.
and the counter balance of village unity and caste unity, which shows his functional approach to the study of Indian village.

In contrast with the functionalist approach, which had been dominant all through the 1950s, structuralism, Marxism and Historical-structural approaches then emerged in the study of Indian social, economic and cultural structures. Louis Dumont's was a major influence in formulating a structuralist paradigm for understanding the Indian social structure. The Marxist paradigm in the analysis of the Indian social structure increased during the 1970s and 1980s. Its use shifted the focus of sociological research from caste, kinship and tradition to a macro-historical treatment of political economy, mode of production and the dialectics of change in the social structure. The dominant themes of the most of the studies using a Marxist paradigm are economic transformations and their relationship to class structure. Studies of peasant movements, agrarian structure and the political economy of the state are some of its major concerns.

S.C. Dubey's Indian Village, Majumdar's 'Caste and Communications in an Indian Village' and the study of Oscar Lewis 'Village Life in Northern India' are some of the examples of the use of

105 ibid
107 D.N. Majumdar (eds), 'Rural profiles' Lucknow: Ethnographic and Folklore society, 1955.
108 Oscar Lewis, Village Life in Northern India, Urbana; University of Illinois, 1958.
structural approach to the Indian village. Ishwaran, while writing about village studies observe that the village studies have generally stressed on two approaches. 1) the need for analysing social change in terms of multiple factors rather than in terms of any single factor and 2) the need to correlate micro-anthropological studies with macro sociological analyses. Factional segmentation in the structure of caste, community and political parties relates to the distribution of relative power. Nadal wrote that social structure coincides with power and authority structure. The emergence of faction in the village communities is also treated as structural prerequisite.\textsuperscript{109} Y. Singh quoting Ralph Nicholas writes that he was able to formulate some structural propositions about the causes and consequences of formation of factions in the rural social system. Nicholas also integrates his theory of faction segmentation with the concept of dominant castes. His propositions are as follows:

1) There are two factors found repeatedly in Indian villages, which are conducive to the development of vertical political cleavages: a) considerable dispersal of agricultural lands among cultivating families as is found, and b) a dominant caste group that is a majority of a village population. A combination of these two factors is ordinarily associated with political conflict between factions.

\textsuperscript{109} Yogendra Singh, Social Stratification and change in India, Manohar Publishers and distributors, New Delhi, 1997.
2) A second set of factors often closely associated with each other, also frequently leads to vertical political cleavages; these are joint land tenure, by a dominant caste group organized on segmentary linkage principles. Each of the vertically divided political groups in this case is generally composed of a patrilineal segment of the dominant caste group, often localized in a ‘quarter’ of a village, and its servants and dependents among the subordinate caste.

3) Political conflicts between stratified groups, horizontally divided from one another, is the least frequent form in contemporary south Asian villages. Such conflicts are often associated with concentration of agricultural land in the hands of one or a few individuals as is found, ideally, under Zamindari land system, and the dominance of a village by a minority caste.

In most of the villages, there is a combination of horizontal and vertical forms of political cleavages at work at the same time. The combination of cleavages is an expression of two facts: 1) in addition to the frequently recurring structural features which permit vertical cleavages, even a small local caste group can have a significant political influence, promoting horizontal cleavages. 2) there are economic class differences, not directly depended upon caste, which also favour the
development of horizontal cleavages. Dasgupta classifies village studies into a) fact finding empirical studies, and b) problem oriented studies. Dasgupta criticized the in-depth village studies. He suggests village studies with comparable variables and units. It would be more relevant according to him to use surveys, census perspective of village studies, farm management surveys, NSS views of village studies are some of the substitutes of in-depth village studies.

The study presented here is of somewhat wider scope than the conventional sociological studies, it does not present a detailed description of the villages or any particular local community. Nor it is a historical study in the conventional sense of term. What the study seeks to do is to identify the different factors, which are bringing a shift in polity and society in rural society in general and in the villages in particular. It also tries to show that in what ways and to what extent the democratisation of politics has brought changes in the villages. This study will investigate the rural polity and society at the three levels viz. 1) at the national level 2) at the regional level and 3) at the level of village. From these investigations there is an effort made to compare and contrast the macro rural reality with the micro reality.

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110 ibid