Chapter VII

Postcolonial Peasant Society in India in the 21st Century

7.1 Introduction

This chapter is taking off from the two supposed contradictory positions; one does believe that ‘peasant’ as a marker of different spatio-temporality has been vanished from the landscape of the social; The other position puts forward the specificity of the postcolonial transition where ‘corporate capital’ can live with ‘pre-capital. Moreover, Capitalism, claims Chatterjee (2008), preserves the culture of pre-capitalism through governmental apparatus. Otherwise, the legitimacy of the capitalism will be threatened/challenged/questioned. In order to maintain the legitimacy of the capitalist system, Capitalism needs to rethink its earlier position where evicted or displaced peasant was not protected by the system. The situation has now changed, capitalism as if compels to address the evicted/displaced peasant. This description carries two important connotations; one, it highlights the active agency of the peasant; peasant activism as if compels capitalism to address their loss caused by the capitalist development. In addition, it also shows the success story of the peasant activism that hamper/obstruct the materialization of full-blown capitalism. Second, it does agree with the view that the governmentality can really address the loss of the peasant caused by the capitalist development. Moreover, it also homogenizes the contradictory shades of the peasant subjectivity. As if all the peasants are aspiring governmental apparatus in order to fulfill their loss caused by capitalism induced primitive accumulation (known as development program). In addition, this analysis presumes that if governmental apparatus works/functions/perform well then all the peasant say ‘yes’ to development program. The entire analysis, as put down by Sanyal

Sociologist Dipankar Gupta (2005) is of the opinion that globalization and the increasing pressure of market force has resulted in almost total erasure/annihilation of the existence of the society of small peasants. Peasant’s son no more wants to be a peasant; they are rather reluctant about farming and see no plausible future as small peasants. In other words, they desire capitalism induced forms of life. Employment in works outside agriculture is increasing in the villages. Instead of engaging in agricultural works, small peasants are shifting towards cities – “vanishing village” – the rural society is fast vanishing. It reminds us the situation of much like Saratchandra’s story “Mahesh” (As shown in different thematic Maps of Barddhaman and South 24 Parganas districts; see Serial No: 21 to 52).

Hardt-Negri (2004), Chatterjee (2008) and Sanyal and Chatterjee (2007) opine that the capitalism-governmentality continuum is producing such a structure where there may be coexistence of capitalist–non-capitalist system. They have produced an elaborate sketch of this structure. For instance, Partha Chatterjee’s reading of the peasant community in postcolonial society is indeed significant. Professor Chatterjee thinks that the uniqueness of 21st century capitalist system lies in its ability to coexist with peasant culture; global capital can live with non-capital. Orthodox Marxist position identifies the transformation of peasants into wage labors as one of the chief features of the process of translation from pre-capitalist society to capitalist society. In orthodox Marxist perspective, identified by Partha Chatterjee (2008) as the growth of capitalist industry inevitably leads to the destruction of peasant community and turn
them into proletariat wage-labors. Professor Chatterjee (2008) is, however, noticing something rather opposite in today’s world – not a solely capitalist system, rather, peaceful (?) coexistence of capitalism and pre-capitalism. He would rather say that the twenty-first century models of industrial development in big agro-based countries like China, India and the South-East Asian countries could aid in further development and preservation of the peasant culture. Chatterjee (2008) wants to problematise the much used notion of primitive accumulation in orthodox Marxism. Orthodox Marxism has so far viewed primitive accumulation as a necessary step in ascent from feudalism to capitalism. Chatterjee (2008) wants to question this very view. The theoretical understanding of primitive accumulation falls inadequate today in explaining the social reality of the postcolonial society. A gap is being noticed between theory and reality. In his words, analysis of the emergent modes in postcolonial capitalism requires fresh viewpoints.

Chatterjee (2008) has tried to understand the tension between global capital and non-corporate capital in the postcolonial society. Just as in West Europe – “inevitable extinction of peasant society as a result of initial accumulation of capital”. But the scenario is different in postcolonial society. In this society, the existence of the peasant society can still be felt; an important reason behind this, in words of Chatterjee (2008), is the governmental and public enterprises that perform the governmental duties, along with the NGOs, are no more distant objects for the peasant society. It bears several significances. First, numerous public-welfare and development related programs aimed at the poor people, including a substantial part of the peasantry, have today been accepted as necessary tasks on part of the government. Peasants therefore pray to the governmental organizations for what they consider as their legitimate demands, such as health, education, supply for agricultural
produce and basic requirements of life. That means that the government officials and political representatives in rural areas constantly remain surrounded by demands for different welfare and development-related programs. It further implies that peasants learn the techniques of governmental systems so that they may succeed in their demands through discussions or by creating pressure at the right places. Second, the governmental bodies exhibit a rather moderate attitude in the debit-credit accounts in meeting such demands. In most cases, the people with demands are divided into smaller groups on basis of their social features, etc. so that it is possible to undertake a moderate policy. Instead of considering the entire populace of the village as some homogenous entity, they are divided into smaller groups as target population.

Although the peasant-society is compelled to come within the ever-approaching (aggressive?) boundary of global capital, it seems that they, once again, are getting back their “lost” “land”. We are familiar with this procedure of “getting back” as ‘public-welfare and developmental works’. It seems that they are getting back what they had ‘lost’ or their ‘sense of loss’, which in its turn is a resultant of the expansion of globalised capital, through this ‘public-welfare and developmental works’. This new reality has been termed by Kalyan Sanyal–Partha Chatterjee as “reversal of the consequences of primitive accumulation” (2007: 30). Even if the peasants lose their land or whatever loss they have to incur because of the collaboration with multinational capitalist enterprises contract-farming, they are getting back all these, through the ‘compensation’ packages. Kalyan Sanyal and Partha Chatterjee (2007) have accepted that it is possible to address the problems and needs of peasants through the developmental programs of the governmental agencies. The governmental agencies, with their multifarious development-oriented programs, have reached deep inside the everyday life of the peasant society. Not only that these peasants are
depended upon the governmental bodies for such services, they have also well adopted the techniques to get their demands met through application of pressure or clever acts. Success of the governmental agencies lies in the fact that they have been able to realize the worries and woes of the peasants.

Subaltern studies had something different to say about peasants. Peasants could conceive of a different reality even while posited against capitalist aggression; a reality which could never be realized because of capitalist domination and persuasion. On the other hand, peasants tried to realize their dreams. Despite innumerable attempts, that imagined space of the peasants remained outside the scope of capitalism. Historians from the subaltern group tried to turn around from capitalism in order to understand the utopias of the peasants. They had turned up with a different language (possibility of different knowledge?) within the lived experiences of the peasants. Though Partha Chatterjee (2008) comments that the explanation on peasant and peasant societies, given by subaltern studies group, is no more appropriate today. The once subaltern theoretician has freed himself off the old theoretical stance.

Against this backdrop, this chapter asks few questions:

- Does the corporate capitalism dictate/dominate the position of the other peasant culture?
- Do these two purportedly different positions remain same?
- Can welfare programs heal/address the wound and pain caused by separation, alienation and displacement, induced by capitalism?
- Can the peasants suffer from the pain of alienation/displacement even if they are not uprooted from their land and livelihood? To put it
differently, even while they remain connected with peasantry, can the peasants be made to face the violence of primitive accumulation?

- Do the lived experiences of the peasant offer different language?
- Do the lived experiences of the peasant offer different knowledge?
- Why Kalyan Sanyal–Partha Chatterjee have failed to notice the different language-knowledge systems of the peasant?
- Are their imagination trapped into the capitalocentric language?
- Are they overemphasized the (metaphysical) presence of Capitalism?

7.2 The ‘Peasant Subject’ of ‘This Time’

Which time do we refer to by this ‘this time’? The structure of which temporal-imagination are we talking about? Is it so that we are attaching a specific temporal-imagination to the social reality and the subject? Is the faculty of thought subjected to the slavery of some particular temporal-imagination? Has some particular mould of temporal-imagination kept us colonized? Is this particular temporal-imagination inclusive? It is now necessary for Asian theorists to re-think over the subject of peasant-community in the postcolonial society. It is not because I feel that the growth of capitalist industrialism inevitably leads to the destruction of the peasant-community and their transformation into the proletariat wage-labors, which, in fact, has time and again been foretold in the last one-and-a-half centuries. I would rather say that the twenty-first century models of industrial development in big agro-based countries like China, India and the South-East Asian countries could aid in further development and preservation of the peasant culture. That however is possible only in a totally changed scenario. Analysis of this emergent mode of postcolonial capitalism demands newer viewpoints (Chatterjee, 2008).
Partha Chatterjee’s (2008) reading of the peasant community in postcolonial society is indeed significant. Professor Chatterjee (2008) thinks that the uniqueness of 21\textsuperscript{st} century capitalist system lies in its ability to coexist with peasant culture; global capital can live with non-capital. Orthodox Marxist position identifies the transformation of peasants into labors as one of the chief features of the process of translation from pre-capitalist society to capitalist society. In Chatterjee’s (2008) language, growth of capitalist industry inevitably leads to the destruction of peasant community and turn them into proletariat wage-labors. Chatterjee (2008) is, however, noticing something rather opposite in today’s world – not a solely capitalist system, rather, peaceful (?) coexistence of capitalism and pre-capitalism. Professor Chatterjee (2008) wants to problematise the much used notion of primitive accumulation in orthodox Marxism. Orthodox Marxism has so far viewed primitive accumulation as a necessary step in ascent from feudalism to capitalism. Chatterjee (2008) wants to question this very view. The theoretical understanding of primitive accumulation falls inadequate today in explaining the social reality of the postcolonial society. A gap is being noticed between theory (thinking) and reality (being).

Chatterjee (2008) has tried to understand the tension between global capital and non-corporate capital in the postcolonial society. Just as in West Europe – inevitable extinction of peasant society as a result of initial accumulation of capital. But the scenario is different in postcolonial society. In this society, the existence of the peasant society can still be felt; an important reason behind this, in words of Chatterjee (2008), is the governmental and public enterprises that perform the governmental duties, along with the NGOs, are no more distant objects for the peasant society. It bears several significances. First, numerous public-welfare and development related programs aimed at the poor people, including a substantial part
of the peasantry, have today been accepted as necessary tasks on part of the government. Peasants therefore pray to the governmental organizations for what they consider as their legitimate demands, such as health, education, supply for agricultural produce and basic requirements of life. That means that the government employees and political representatives in rural areas constantly remain surrounded by demands for different welfare and development-related programs. It further implies that peasants learn the techniques of governmental systems so that they may succeed in their demands through discussions or by creating pressure at the right places. Secondly, the governmental bodies exhibit a rather moderate attitude in the debit-credit accounts in meeting such demands. In most cases, the people with demands are divided into smaller groups on basis of their social features, etc. so that it is possible to undertake a moderate policy. Instead of considering the entire populace of the village as some homogenous entity, they are divided into smaller groups as target population.

Partha Chatterjee (2008) is of the opinion that the governmental agencies play an active role behind the non-occurrence of any large scale peasant movement. Peasants are losing their land for industrialization process or they are being compelled to get into agreement with multinational capital (though this process is yet to take a massive proportion in West Bengal). Even then, according to Chatterjee (2008), peasants are not uniting together for some larger movement, though their land is taken away for the industrial purpose. It is thus explained by Kalyan Sanyal and Partha Chatterjee (2007) as [P]rimitive accumulation – a huge number of people are being ousted from their earlier occupations but are not getting any footing in the new (Industrial) space – this could be foregrounded to move towards a radical critique of capitalist
development. But yet another depoliticization was done through governmentality, a political management of poverty became central in development.

Sanyal and Chatterjee’s (2007) focus is towards political management of poverty. Legitimacy of Capitalism will depend upon the success of poverty management. If issues like compensation and rehabilitation can be properly dealt with, then there will not be any problem in the smooth run of capitalist growth, with the aid of private accumulation. In West Bengal, one of the major features of recent protest against land accumulation is that, despite the age old sayings about the unity among peasants, a large populace of these villages does not take part in such protests. They feel that they have opportunities of benefiting from the governmental policies. As a result, peasant politics has acquired a new qualitative dimension that was beyond the scope of the traditional notion about peasant society... older form of peasant revolution have influenced the history of peasant society for many a centuries; it does not match the role of violence in contemporary peasant politics. Dynamics of those peasant revolutions of the past were in accordance with their own conceptions. Their features were, as shown by Ranajit Guha (1983) in his book, maintaining unity of the community and negative opposition of those whom they considered as exploiters. Today, application of violence in peasant grievance has become much more calculated and based on rational logic. So that the focus can be shifted towards some particular grievances in order to gain governmental benefits and privileges. Premeditated deliberate tactics are adopted so as to receive expected reaction from government officials, political leaders and especially the media. This possibly is the most important change in the peasant politics in the last two to three decades (Chatterjee, 2008).
Peasant society is no more outside of governmentality. Kalyan Sanyal and Partha Chatterjee (2007) do believe that conceptually there cannot be any ‘outside’ of governmentality. Peasant society, in its entirety, seems to have come within the network of Governmental apparatus. The question of the permanence of peasant society in the future depends on the expertise with which peasants can bargain with Governmental apparatus. Other than negotiation with governmentality, there is no path open to the peasants. As if the production and re-production of the space named ‘non-corporate capital’ is happening hand in hand with governmentality. ‘Non-corporate capital’ contains not only the peasant society, within its ambit comes everyone from the hawkers to the illegal dwellers in the city space. Peasant, hawker, illegal dwellers – their conditions are more or less same in postcolonial society – their existence depends on their negotiations with Governmental apparatus.

Subaltern studies had something different to say about peasants. Peasants could conceive of a different reality even while posited against capitalist aggression; a reality which could never be realized because of capitalist domination. On the other hand, peasants tried to realize their dreams. Despite innumerable attempts, that imagined space of the peasants remained outside the scope of capitalism. Historians from the subaltern group tried to move beyond capitalism in order to understand the utopias of the peasants. They had debunked a different language (possibility of different knowledge?) within the lived experiences of the peasants. As Partha Chatterjee (2008) comments that explanation is no more appropriate today. The once subaltern theoretician has freed himself off the old theoretical stance.
There is a reflection of Foucault’s rendition governmentality in Partha Chatterjee's (2008) elucidation. This concept does not allow any room for imagining something beyond dominant/hegemonic reality. It then starts appearing as if all problematics, confusions, and their solutions may be placed within this singular matrix. It seems as if the remedy to all the feelings arising from the pain and alienation suffered by the peasants is possible within this given capitalist system (or given Governmental apparatus).

Side by side, Sanyal and Chatterjee's (2007) explanations are also enriched with the theoretical base provided by the recent and much talked about book by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri – ‘Empire’ (2000). There is detailed discussion on the peasant society of this time in the next book by these two writers, the ‘Multitude’ (public who are multifaceted yet consisting of common features). Outright they declare, “Agriculture, along with all other sectors, becomes increasingly biopolitical” (2004: 116). As per them, today’s peasant society is “linked to the global capitalist relations of production and exchange” (2004: 116). At this moment, the path towards solution for the time will follow the manner in which this time will be explained. Hardt and Negri has gauged this period in accordance with an overall capitalist temporal-conception. One may question why some other temporal-conception is (un)real for them. If capitalist temporal-conception is a kind of hindrance, then why could they not conceive of the possibility of a time beyond the scope of capitalist temporal-conception? Had it been so, it might be that they would then be able to find elements of different temporal-conceptions in lives of peasants that would resist capitalism. It might be that they would be able to discover a different concept of ethics. But their writing lacks any such indication. With their belief firm in the all-inclusiveness of
capitalism, they have tried to portray the peasant society considering that any resistance has to arise from within this capitalist temporal-conception. According to the observation of Hardt and Negri, the hegemonic discourse of the small peasants of this time is:

These various agents [World Bank, IMF] are united by a common ideology, which spans from capitalist modernization to neo-liberalism and global economic integration. According to this economic ideology, small holding subsistence agriculture is economically backward and inefficient, not only because of its technological and mechanical limitations but also and more importantly because of its relations of exchange. In a globally integrated market, according to this view, an economic actor in agriculture or any other sector can survive only by focusing productive energies on a single commodity it can produce better than others and distribute on a wide scale. The resulting export-oriented single-crop agriculture inevitably mandates large-scale production and the concentration of ownership. Capitalist collectivization has thus tended toward creating a virtual monopoly of the soil with huge units agricultural production employing armies of agricultural workers that produce for the world market. Outside of this is left a growing rural poor that owns either no land or insufficient land for survival.

The figure of the peasant has thus throughout the world faded into the background of the economic landscape of agriculture, which tends to be populated now by huge corporation, agricultural workers, and an increasingly desperate rural poor (2004: 120) (Italics added).
Reason behind using this long quote is to make it clear that Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri believes that there is no more any necessity of a separate category called peasant. But that never means that peasants do not exist; peasants are surviving as indivisible parts of capitalism. In other words, today’s peasant society has come within the ambit of the biopolitical. Gone are those days of romanticizing about the peasants. They think that the peasant economy that has turned into history and whoever is outside this (Outside of this is left a growing rural poor that owns either no land or insufficient land for survival); it is possible to address all their problems through the programs of the biopolitical. Movements and struggles and oppositions will all be directed towards who can succeed in bringing how much of the ambit of these programs towards them. All will want their demands to come under the programs of biopolitical. For Hardt and Negri, today’s reality is constructed on the twin bases of globalised capital and biopolitical.

Hardt and Negri’s (2004) seem to be some sort of reflection of the tone found in Marx and Engels’s ‘Communist Manifesto’. Marx and Engels considered capitalism to be the only social reality in ‘Communist Manifesto’, and they commented that the difference between the middle class, autonomous workers’ class, lumpen proletariat, etc. will all be wiped off and all will ultimately convert into working class. In a somewhat similar manner, Hardt and Negri too feel that despite the multiplicity of people in terms of the labor relations, all will ultimately convert into the multitude, consisting of common features. It is so because of the coming of the multiple forms of labor under the ambit of global-capital. If professional differences and variations are the different parts, capitalism is then the whole – the common feature. And multitude
is hence at the helm of all protests. We get the idea of the ‘multitude’ in place of the working class. According to them –

The tendency of the figure of the peasant, then, to become a less separate and distinct category today is indicative of the more general trend of the socialization of all the figures of labor… Certainly, each form of labor remains singular in its concrete existence, and every type of worker is different from every other – the autoworker from the rice farmer from the retail salesperson – but this multiplicity tends to be inscribed in a common substrate. In philosophical terms we can say that these are so many singular modes of bringing to life a common laboring substance: each mode has a singular essence and yet they all participate in a common substance (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 124–125)

Even within the variation and diversity, Hardt and Negri (2004) has attempted portray a sketch of the static essence of the ‘subject’. There is noticed an indomitable desire in them to compartmentalize the ‘subject’ within a specific matrix. To them, the minimum condition for the unity of ‘subject’ is globalised capitalism. That means, they want to conceive of the ‘subject’ with capitalism in the centre. From their writings, we come to know that “[t]he contradictory conceptual couple, identity and difference, is not the adequate framework for understanding the organization of multitude. Instead we are a multiplicity of singular forms of life and at the same time share a common global existence” (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 127). It is not possible for the theoretical framework of Hardt and Negri to accommodate the in-between-ness of the subject.
7.3 Foucault – Agamben continuum, not Foucault contra Agamben

Partha Chatterjee (2008), Kalyan Sanyal and Partha Chatterjee (2007), Hardt and Negri (2004) – all of them are influenced by Foucault's concepts of biopolitical and governmentality. Not only this; all of them are also used to a particular form of reading Foucault. It is that reading of Foucault that teaches us that “another form of power has developed in the second half of the twentieth century. And that is governmentality. This power neither punishes nor wages war; it even does not implement or execute any law. Task of this power is to keep different groups of people mobile and productive – or, it may be said, to look after them. There has no doubt been a global expansion of this governmentality with the shift in the nature of capital in the last twenty or thirty years. In one sense, this is what we are calling globalization (Chatterjee, 2005). This kind of reading of Foucault is not questionable. It will not at all be difficult to pick up a few lines from Foucault in defense of this position. But Foucault is not only this; on reading Foucault, we can also raise this question: “If power is biopower, the function of which is essentially the management and increase of life, how is one to understand the role of killing at the heart of this power? In other words, in what manner does biopower fasten itself to the exercise of sovereign power?” (Genel, 2006: 49). While discussing racism or racial discrimination, Foucault says how power naturalizes the act of ‘killing’ (it may be that enthusiastic readers are reminded of the mass killing in Gujarat or the events in West Bengal’s Nandigram). Biopolitical power is thus not only naturalizing mass killing, but also circumscribing it. “Racism is thus understood by Foucault as “the precondition that makes killing acceptable” in “a normalizing society” (256); it is the point through which biopower must pass in order to exercise sovereign power, the right over death… Nazi society, both regulatory and insuring, at the same time
“unleashes” its power to kill through exposing its citizens to death” (Genel, 2006: 49). Agamben would perhaps thus read this process:

>[W]hat characterizes modern politics is not so much inclusion of zoe in the polis – which is, in itself, absolutely ancient – nor simply the fact that life as such becomes a principle object of the projections and calculations of State power. Instead, the decisive fact is that, together with the process by which exception everywhere becomes the rule, the realm of bare life – which is originally situated at the margins of the political order – gradually begins to coincide with the political realm, and exclusion and inclusion, outside and inside, bios and zoe, right and fact, enter into a zone of irreducible indistinction (Agamben, 1998: 9).

The only function of power is not to make the people productive and/or keep them mobile – besides conceiving of power as inclusive, Agamben also talks of bringing to discussion its aspect of exclusion. From the discussions of Partha Chatterjee (2008), Kalyan Sanyal (2007), Hardt and Negri (2004) it appeared as if everything have come within the ambit of power. ‘Inside’ is what attracts their importance. On the other hand, Agamben says that power creates an outside – simultaneous production of inside–outside/inclusion-exclusion. Agamben further expands Foucault's concept of biopower. Production of an exceptional space and throwing away in the Bare Life – all these arises from biopower. In short, “political society” in Chatterjee's (2008) sense is better understood today as a problem [read as ‘state of exception’] for civil society’s conceptualization of democracy and development, rather than as the target of that development” (Menon, 2009). Not the aim of development, but creation as an exceptional space; not providing rights, but snatching away the hitherto enjoyed rights.
In Roman law, it was possible to convert some punishable person in Homo Sacer and, by snatching away all that person’s rights, it was possible (for anybody) to kill that person. But, even if not from the legal point of view, at least conceptually it originated in ancient Greek system. See, at its root is the Greek word ‘zen’ or life. Beginning with Aristotle, many people have maintained that it is the state that lifts the ‘zoe’ or people without any legal rights to ‘bios’ or people equipped with citizen’s rights. At one point, I too considered ‘zoe’ to be the pre-state so called natural life. But later I discovered it was not so at all. ‘Zoe’ is actually a construct of the state. It means condemning a person into the bare life by snatching away all such citizen’s rights that the person had so far been enjoying (Agamben, 2009: 40).

Agamben is perhaps trying to talk about detention/confinement and then exclusion. A space – which has been (re)presented as abnormal/pathological and exceptional – is identified as social problem only because it is different on basis of the socially acceptable (hegemonic) set of rules/norms and regulations. (Re)presenting its being exceptional and problematic as an explanation (without accepting multiplicity and diversity), it is important to colonize and then exclude it. It means that power remains active through the continuous construction of the concept of the exceptional. The different space is within the ambit of power because it is exceptional – it has been identified as being an exception. As it has been labeled as exception, power thus uses it as a ploy to exclude that space into the ‘Bare Life’ – a simultaneous process of inclusion and exclusion. The importance of Agamben’s thought lies in his cognizance of both ‘State of exception’ and ‘Bare Life’ – is a simultaneous conception of the two. We had become used to a conventional reading of Foucault.
We had thought that it is function of power to make the human mass productive and active by dividing them into smaller groups. Agamben showed that power presents different groups of people as ‘exceptions’ and thus naturalizes the necessity of application of power – power gets the license of naturalness.

7.4 If Agamben would read Marx’s Primitive Accumulation

While reading primitive accumulation, we are using two concepts of Agamben – ‘State of exception’ and ‘Bare Life’. A space is always viewed by placing it in a historical scale of development from the feudalism to capitalism. That means, it is something different from capitalism, something exceptional. Something that lags behind capitalism, finds its place at a step lower than capitalism in the staircase. In other words, it is that particular space which lacks the qualities of Capitalism. It is thus represented as the ‘lacking other’ of Capitalism. This ‘lacking other’ does not enjoy the independent definition of its own. It does carry the dependent definition. Things as these are discussed or talked about only when a transition or development is conceived of with capitalism as the starting point. The capitalist developmental project starts with its task of establishing ‘civilizing mission’ by keeping the ‘state of exception’ at the fore such as the Taliban mal-governance etc. It means that unless a state of exception is constructed or something is presented as an exception following the logic of history, capitalist intervention cannot be legitimized. ‘Underdevelopment’, ‘Feudalism’, ‘Third-world’ – capitalism views all these as states of exception – as the derogatory ‘lacking other’. It is necessary to control them because they are ‘exceptional’. This control is executed at times through waging of wars, at times with the slogan of democracy, and at times in the name of development. Production and reproduction in capitalist system continue with the
construction of ‘exceptions’. And hence, primitive accumulation too continues incessantly. If there is no demarcation of past and present of capitalism (historicity of Capitalism), i.e. if we can get beyond the thought that there was a particular time when capitalism began, then it is necessary to detail on the working of the capitalism–primitive accumulation continuum. To us, primitive accumulation is not the past of capitalism; it is the moment of origin of capitalism; it is continuing, continuing all around us; continuing everyday, every moment; and that is happening not only in the rural but urban space as well. That is happening in the everyday life we are living (Chakrabarti and Dhar, 2008a). “Louis Althusser and Antonio Negri have argued, Marx’s theory of primitive accumulation can be read as a contribution to an understanding of the “materiality” of social relations and subjectivity, and ultimately, despite appearances, to an understanding of the capitalist mode of production itself” (As quoted in Read, 2002:25).

‘Exception’ – ‘Control’ – ‘Exclusion’, this procedure runs simultaneously, none precedes or succeeds the others. The various modes of control that are there – war, democracy, development – taking any of one these routes will mean dealing with land and land–relations. And that means dealing with all those men and women who live in and with that land – that includes both the male and female peasants as well as their families and community lives; and this whole, in turn, dwells along with the nature, rivers, soil, forests, insects, various birds and animals and even those small earth worms without whom it would be impossible to think of farming – dealing with all these and uprooting/displacing/evacuating them only to throw them towards the ‘Bare Life’. In this regard, it would be very important to remember what Read says about primitive accumulation:
The laws and the acts that turned common lands into pastures and forced the peasantry off the land did not have as their goal the creation of the “proletariat” as a propertyless working class; this was rather an unintended effect that was later seized by other agents and actors. “The knights of industry, however, only succeeded in supplanting the knights of the sword by making use of events in which they had played no part whatsoever” (1977, 875). Expropriation in itself does not produce “free workers”, however, only disenfranchised peasants and artisans. The transition from feudalism to capitalism is neither smooth nor easy, and it requires the necessary intervention of laws, the state, and new forms of police to transform disenfranchised peasants and artisans into subjects of labor. As Marx argues, the state, and particularly its powers of police and violence, are then a contingent but necessary condition of the capitalist mode of production (899) (Read, 2002: 32–34).

A very popular notion regarding primitive accumulation is that it creates ‘working class’. Read has something different to say; his is a different reading of Marx’s primitive accumulation. It is not that peasants turn into workers on being deviated from their livelihood. They turn into disenfranchised peasants and artisans – who are, at the same time, within the ambit of the newly realized capitalist matrix. According to Read, it is impossible to construct this reality without violence. What will capitalism do with the ‘surplus labor’ or ‘surplus people’ [not understood as Marxist sense, as mentioned by Resnick and Wolf (1987), Chakrabarti and Dhar (2009)] who do not convert into wage-laborers/working class but remain as the disenfranchised peasants and artisans? According to Partha Chatterjee and Kalyan Sanyal (2007), capitalism fears that they will turn into a ‘dangerous class’ – and hence is there the
call for all the developmental programs aimed at this section of the people. Read’s statement follows the thought of Agamben. Read attempts at creating the capitalism–violence continuum. To put in a different way, biopolitical power is not only developmental, it is also violent.

If we attempt a re-view at the discussion so far, we would see:

A) According to Partha Chatterjee (2008), Partha Chatterjee and Kalyan Sanyal (2007), Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2004), Governmentality or Biopolitical Power plays a developmental role. Or, it would be better to say that biopolitical power plays its role in a persuasive manner; its primary aim is to make the society agree to certain views. The objective of power is to posit itself as a part of welfare programs. Power is brought into the equation in this manner that “it will be applied for welfare of the mass – welfare not in some general sense, particular welfares for particular groups of people” (Chatterjee, 2000). Secondly, they do not conceive of any ‘outside’ for biopolitical power; everything, as if, has come within it. It seems they are fissures the Hegelian idea of the whole. There are several gaps and lacunae, many a things are in a disaggregated state. Yet, all these are textured together, held together, by something. And, this ‘something’ is the biopolitical power. It is an attempt at creating unity amidst so much differentiation and diversity. If everything comes within the ambit of power or if, in Gramscian terms, hegemony prevails, will there at all be any possibility of protest? “Protest is possible, and that happens as well. There is protest in form of the everyday negotiation, in the attempt to transcend the boundary of discipline under different pretexts, or by refusing to oblige by governmentality. But that is never able to shake the entire structure of power; it cannot go beyond just temporarily disturbing the structure. And, after recovering from that temporary
disturbance, governmental measures become all the more active and dedicated to mass-welfare with the aid of newer surveys, newer date and newer policies. This makes power all the more pervading and more active than ever before (Chatterjee, 2000).

B) It is as if bio-political power entails welfare. Agamben questions this assumption. He wants to raise issues located at the other side of the relation of redistributive justice with power and state. It is not that state always invariably means the essential structure of redistributive justice. State snatches all forms of rights away from people, and throws them straightway into the ‘Bare Life’. It was as if a radical break was introduced by Agamben in the discussion regarding power. He wanted to introduce the concept of exclusion within the discussion of power; as if everything – inclusion–exclusion, inside–outside – is within the whole named power. But the idea of Hegelian whole remained. Agamben attempted at pointing out the missing link – he rewrote the state’s history of redistributive justice. In order to ensure that the people condemned in the ‘Bare Life’ cannot return as the ‘dangerous class’, it is necessary to conceive of several welfare programs. Inclusion-Exclusion-Inclusion– this is the structure in which Agamben wants to conceive of power. Previous discussion showed as that the disaggregated reality is given a definite aggregated shape by biopolitical power. The only task of power is as of to take care of that process of aggregation. Agamben showed that power, within the innumerable gaps and fissures, constructs aggregation and violence, and aggregation and exception. Condemning into the Bare Life through construction of state of exception and, later, bringing Bare Life within the domain of welfare program.
Jacques Ranciere’s view on this theoretical stance is:

I would really question the idea that in contemporary capitalism…

becoming dominant in left wing thinking (Ranciere, 2009).

Ranciere is against whole structuralistic Hegelian thought. He is not ready to agree that everything has already come within the realm of biopolitical power. He wants to conceive of a new space that goes beyond the biopolitical power or hegemony. Once we put on the lens of hegemony or biopolitical power, nothing else needs to be thought about; nothing new can be seen or felt either. Everything seems to be already within the structure or power or hegemony. The tug-of-war with power, then, assumes much significance; all forms of differences and diversities are then overlooked. Ranciere, hence, wants to think beyond the structure or power or hegemony.

Ability to think beyond that point opens up the chance to raise a few important questions. Being deviated from their livelihood, peasants are transformed into disenfranchised peasants and artisans. Later, several welfare programs are being carried in order to heal the pains and wounds caused to these peasants and artisans. The questions, hence, are –

- Can welfare programs heal/address the wound and pain caused by separation, alienation and displacement?
- Uprooting from lived life and hurling into the Bare Life – these are clearly visible. But, does ‘exclusion’ occur as per just this narrow sense of the term? Or, does it also result in the exclusion of some particular language and thought
(forms of life that also constitute the philosophy of life)? The repudiation of some particular philosophy?

- Do the peasants suffer from the pain of alienation even if they are not uprooted from their land and livelihood? To put it differently, even while they remain connected with agriculture, can the peasants be made to face the violence of primitive accumulation (eviction)?

### 7.5 Life wor(l)ds of the peasant: Language of the resistant subject

What are we? What sorts of experiences keep working within our day-to-day relations? What are the categories and what are the things that we put to use to sustain ourselves? What are those things with which we create/construct our life world? It is necessary to know these, however difficult the task be. It is not possible to perform this task banking upon just the European sociological theories (Chakrabarty, 1998: 58) [Translation mine].

*The question is, whether we will perform this difficult task. Till now, we have seen two streams of hegemonic academic acts – either we have attempted at universalizing the theories created in the West, or we have based our works entirely upon descriptive empiricism. We have thus brought to fore different experiences in contrary to the demand of the universalization of theory. It is important to mention at this point that both these viewpoints have emerged from the cultural ambience of the West. We have this undying urge within us to ‘know’ about the sorts of experiences working in the day to day life of these village people. To capitalism, the philosophy of these ‘worthless’ (?) peasants is just a mysticism, not some meaningful, significant ethical forms of life.*
Primitive accumulation colonizes and seizes these forms of life. Capitalism wants to expunge/exclude/foreclose/repress this particular philosophy of life (informed by the forms of life in such a way that the life and philosophy enmeshed with each other) from the world of language, and arranges for every little initiative that it feels necessary to perform that expunging. We keep treading a different route; our attempt is to empathize more with the questions of difference and deviations. In the so called ‘worthless’ mystic philosophy, as labeled by Capitalism, we, have found the different language of life.

At the very outside in this essay, we encountered two different viewpoints – one group of sociologists believe that the village is fast vanishing; rural society has no more any existence of its own, and has come under capitalism in its all entirety. Another group of sociologists want to conceive of capitalism by connecting it with biopolitical power. Besides, they want to think over the issue from the peasants’ perspective. They have portrayed the manner in which peasants are trying to resist and/or negotiate with capitalism, a construct of the Western countries, which has came to the non-Western countries through colonialism (whose procedure was later fastened by arrival of globalization). But, the problem with these sociologists is that they have agreed from the very outset over the universal existence of biopolitical power. The primary pre-conception of both these groups of sociologists is that biopolitical power, along with capitalism, exists everywhere. It is over the conception of peasant agency that they differ. In the former theory, there is no possibility of the agency of peasants. No more is there anything as peasant society. The latter, however, analyses capitalism from the perspective of the peasants; the manner in which peasants are, or are not, taking over capitalism. The manner in which capitalism is
being confronted in the non-Western countries and the fragmented shapes that capitalism is taking as a result of these confrontations are, to state in short, different non-western editions of capitalism. These sociologists have already decided that alternate-models have to be conceived of from capitalism and capitalism only. They are of the opinion that all possibilities of protest lie inherent in capitalism only. They are mum over the possibility of going beyond capitalism for some solution. They have possibly tried to conceive of a politics of coexistence. In other words, it may be that they have developed this belief that the collapse of socialist dream has blocked all paths to alternate thinking. For them, the only possible path for alternate thinking is radical socialism. Today, when there is no more even the slightest trace of socialist alternative thoughts, there is no other way than accepting capitalism. It may be that this attitude of thought has driven them towards this kind of theorization, a theorization which is caught/trapped by the imagination of Capitalism. Their thought badly suffers from lack of imagination.

Peasants speak:

*We won’t give land for industrialization.*

*We won’t agree to contract-farming.*

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1 It is also possible to explain it differently. There may always be a debate over which is more efficient in this regard – peasants’ agency or the flexibility of capitalism? It may always be stated that one place where capitalism scores is its ability to transform itself whenever felt necessary. It is not any rigid system. Faced with opposition, capitalism can re-assess its own situation and take decisions based on the present practicality. It generates newer techniques of maintaining hegemony. In that sense, capitalism is an innovative system. One such way of maintaining hegemony is *synthetic hegemony*. To have a detailed idea about this synthetic hegemony, read Ajit Chaudhury (2003).

2 The entire project is too orientalist.
We won’t use high yielding varieties of seeds,

We won’t apply chemical fertilizers for our lands... neither would we accept any compensation package...

• How will capitalism come to an agreement with such ‘non-cooperative’ peasants who say so many ‘no’s’?

• How, in their turn, would the peasants, who are so ‘non-cooperative’ and say so many ‘no’s, come to an agreement by accepting capitalism?

• How will the different non-Western models of capitalism come into existence with these ‘non-cooperative’ peasants?

• Why/how did important social scientists like Hardt, Negri, Sanyal, Chatterjee, etc. fail to see these ‘non-cooperative-resistant’ peasants, bent on so many ‘no’s? Or, did they, even on noticing these peasants, translate their protest in the language of governmentality?

• What is the compulsion behind translating the protest of these ‘non-cooperative’, ‘disagreeing’ peasants into the language of governmentality?

• Is it possible to translate between two different worldviews – capitalism and the ‘non-cooperative’, ‘disagreeing’ peasants?

• Is any sort of negotiation or understanding or translation at all possible without the ‘cooperation’, at least in some cases, of these peasants?

• How will the inclusion of these non-cooperative, non-compromising subjects be made possible in capitalist system – a system developed by the union of capitalist and non-capitalist systems?  

3 In this discussion, the term non-capitalist refers to such systems that are not capitalist yet collaborate with the capitalist system. For systems that are neither capitalist, nor collaborating with capitalism in its project(s), we will use the term not-capitalist.

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Either the demands of these non-compromising subjects have to be suppressed (by sending police or military; just as was the case in Singur, Nandigram or Lalgarh), or else, their demands have to be translated into the language of governmentality. It means that protests will be there, but attempts have to be made so that the language of protest comes within the matrices of governmentality. The ‘non-cooperative’ subject, who keeps uttering one after another ‘no’, has to be transformed into ‘cooperative’ subject. Debates over these will continue and different moments from such debates will continue to be presented as descriptive research-articles. And this exactly is the dominant pattern of research.

We would to make a third proposal. We want to think from the perspective of this ‘non-cooperative’ subject who keeps saying so many ‘no’s. This act of saying ‘no’ and this ‘non-cooperation’ of them carry signs of another world of thought. The materialization of Capitalism is possible only through the repress of this different philosophy of life. Thus the materialization of capitalism and exclusion-repression continue/work simultaneously. Capitalism has no scope for the presence of any different philosophy. Capitalism allows only that much which is correct in respect of the structure of capitalism on a whole. Capitalism can have enough capacity to exclude or repress this different philosophy of life even without uprooting/evicting/evacuating the peasants from their lands. Hence, what continues in tandem with the apparent external capitalist capturing is a silent repression-suppression-expulsion of a particular philosophy.
Hence, yet another question: Can the different welfare programs (read, the language of governmentality) heal the pain of separation-alienation-displacement, induced by Capitalism?

We will read a different philosophical text in order to realize the kind of experience and observation that works within the everyday relations of the village people who live on peasantry. This school of philosophy does not belong to the western enlightenment tradition. It is a particular ‘non-western’ school of thought. It may be a new entry point of alternative thought, which is never-ever orientalist. Perhaps the attempt to bring to fore this other excluded-repressed-forgotten philosophy is called politics. Are we then turning towards solipsism and too egotist? No, we do not want to create any closure for the possibility of dialogues. We are not self-centered; at the same time, we are also not Eurocentric or orientalist. We are trying to go beyond these two and open up the path to a third possibility.

7.6 Svatva: Raghunath Shiromani–Karl Marx – The (im)possible dialogue

As per the smritis⁴, there are two types of objects – Swakiya (one’s own possession) and parakiya (belonging to other). As per the smritis, we do not have any possessedness whatsoever over the parakiya objects⁵. This smriti shastra says that the meaning of possessedness or svatva is fitness for use or fit to be used or useful or

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⁴ Smriti literally that which is remembered, refers to a specific body of Hindu religious scripture, and is a codified component of Hindu customary law. The most famous and the earliest known smr̥ti text is the Laws of Manu.

⁵ It should be mentioned in this context that the British administrators read the smr̥ti shastras very minutely. But, the question remains, why did they read these texts with such attention?
serviceable or usable. Eating, donation, selling, etc. have usefulness. For instance, it is because rice or bread can be eaten that they have some usefulness. And this usability changes with the difference in svakiya and parakiya. At least, the smritis think so. Hence, although rice or bread can be eaten (that means, they have some usability), we do not have any possessedness over parakiya rice. The equation formulated by the smriti shastra, hence, is:

\[ \text{Svatva (possessedness)} = \text{fitness for use/usability} = \text{recognition of the difference between svakiya and parakiya.} \]

Raghunath’s question is: If Svatva is based on usability/fit for use, then how can the svatva of rice differ on basis of the distinction as recognized by the Swakiya and parakiya? (Bandopadhyaya, 2006). Absence of Svatva or usability, or difference between the Swakiya and parakiya is possible only when there is claiming done by application of force or private ownership may be established in bourgeois sense of the term. It means that there is no relation between the concept of Svatva and the distinction between the Swakiya and parakiya. Therefore, Raghunath reminds us that the equation: Svatva (possessedness) = fitness for use/usability = recognition of the distinction between Swakiya and parakiya, is, in actuality, a non-equation. Potter and Bhattacharya edited (1993) Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies deals with the issue of possessedness in this manner:

Another new category is possessedness (Svatva).

Objection: That is nothing but being fit for use as one wishes.

Answer: Not precisely, for one may “use” food, i.e., eat it, even when it belongs to others.

Objector: One is enjoined not to eat food belonging to others.

Raghunatha: You see, you must already understand possessedness in order to understand such an injunction. Possessedness is a property that belongs
to people when they receive gifts and that they lose when they give things away (1993: 533).

In this context, we may also recall Nrisinghaprasad Bhaduri (2009 [1416]). He writes that the one who is the sovereign king, who has domination over the entire world; he can give away his entire kingdom. Svabarswami answers – how can he? An ordinary person too can enjoy exactly the same amount of land that a sovereign king enjoys. In this respect, the two are similar. Land has its fitness for use, and, because of this, both the king and the common people can enjoy this land. But it is an entirely different thing if the king applies force to capture the land. In that case, only the king can enjoy that particular piece of land. If we agree with the logic of ‘fitness for use’, the question of ownership upon land becomes meaningless and does not call for any discussion. Professor Bhaduri (2009 [1416]) further states that in a Brahmana as ancient as the Satapatha Brahmana, we find that when Bisvakarma expresses his desire to donate land to the Bhoubana Yajnika Purohita as honorarium, then Mother-Earth herself arrives to warn the king and she says – no mortal human has the right to give me away. You are behaving like a fool. From this conversation, we come to know that the ruling king, on one hand, is trying to establish his administrative right, and, on the other hand, those who consider land to be the origin and sustainer of everything animate and inanimate, are creating obstruction to this aggression.

There is no swakiya-parakiya distinction whatsoever between the ruler and the ruled in matters related to use of land. This difference may arise only when the ruler tries to capture/control land by applying his administrative power. The question of private ownership of land, thus, holds no importance in this regard. As per Sundar Sarukkai,
“ownership cannot be restricted to a simple binary of the owner and the owned, nor can it be understood entirely in terms of freedom to do what one wants with the owned. Instead, there are social obligations which restrict our sense of [bourgeois] ownership” (2008: 286).

In his essay entitled ‘Debates on the Law in Thefts of Wood’ (1842) in the journal *Rheinische Zeitung*, Marx comments:

> By my private ownership do I not exclude every other person from this ownership? Do I not thereby violate his right of ownership?

Marx problematises the idea of bourgeois ownership. If a piece of land is seen from the perspective of enjoying or usability, then, establishing private ownership on that means depriving other people from enjoying or using that land. Marx observes a specific culture and specific ‘customs’ among the people of ‘poor class’. According to his, “the entire poor class based on the *indeterminate* aspect of property… all customary rights of the poor were based on the fact that certain forms of property were *indeterminate* in character, for they were not definitely private property, but neither were they definitely common property” (1842) (italics added). Critics may identify this statement as suffering from oversimplification. Nonetheless, that does not cancel the idea of indefiniteness of property. In the same essay, Marx also shows that this *indeterminate* aspect of property’ is gradually being destroyed and is being taken under the purview of ‘abstract civil law’. Marx also describes with drawing instances how this change is causing grave harm to the people of the ‘poor class’. It means that Marx wants to focus on the importance of the idea of indefiniteness of property for the poor class people. He writes:
We can make this clear by taking the monasteries as an example. The monasteries were abolished, their property was secularized [read privatized]… But the accidental support which the poor found in the monasteries was not replaced… On the contrary, a new restriction was imposed on them… (1842).

Let us read the above like this: Several homeless people live in a monastery. They have no other place to go. The fruits and flowers that grow around the monastery are taken by these people to the market and sold by these people to sustain themselves. They also eat those fruits. Now, if that monastery goes into private ownership, those people will, needless to mention, be displaced. Now, will any one time compensation be able to match the continuous security (both monetary and in terms of shelter) that the monastery provided them? Was this kind of security possible without the indefiniteness of property of the monastery? Is the reason behind the unwillingness of the peasants to agree upon contract-farming or industrialization somewhat similar? Is this the reason why it is impossible to heal the pain of alienation of the peasants through some developmental programs? Another parallel, comparatively easier, question: where is the problem with private property?

7.7 Description and analysis of a researcher

This part uses some personal experiences of Subhendu Dasgupta, which he wrote in the form of essays. We are intentionally using two such essays here, whose titles indicate what he has tried to write or which picture of village life he has attempted to focus upon. Titles of the two essays are:

(b) Kuriye Bariye (2005) (Gathering: From here and there)

Picking up excerpts from different parts of these two essays, we are re-writing/re-narrating them yet again. This is not a long quotation, given below; we are reproducing it in such a way that would help to guide us to grasp/understand the abstract meaning of the Svatva. This empirical description is written with first person account.

Nine villages in Birbhum district – Banshpukur, Bidyadharpukur, Kayetpukur, Taltore, Darphashila, Bandhnabagram, Sattore, Thiruli, and Kendradangal.

While in the village, it came to my mind; by rural economy, we [today] mean a (Capitalist) market-based economy based on production and buying-selling. But there is a big economy in villages, which is not (Capitalist) market-based. Just as in other villages, the agricultural land in this village too produces food crops. While moving around in these villages, I had noticed the different varieties of leafs and vegetables that grow here – sushni, kalmi, shakpukuri, gime, hingche, piring, pui. These leafs are growing all on their own by the side of the streets, beside ponds, along the unused lands [which are named as ‘waste land’ in government registers]. Then we noticed the variety of fruits, and also the kinds of flowers planted by the people. They were also seen by the roadsides and beside the ponds. Besides, herbal medicines too grow [by the roadside and beside the ponds and lakes], like Kalmegh, Basak, Tulasi, Neem, Arjun, Nayantara, and so on. As per our list there were 22 types of vegetable leafs, 19 kinds of fruits, 24 different types of herbal medicinal plants [it
happens like this]. In the villages that we saw, fishes are available in the
‘nobody’s’ ponds [in many cases it is seen that the pond owners live in
cities, or even if they are in the village, use of the ponds never remain
restricted to their personal sphere], and the rivers and other water bodies.
In our list, we found 7 types of fishes, and apart from that there were also
googli and other eatables.

Apart from food, the village people require several other things for their
livelihood – place for living, houses, building and mending such houses,
utensils, oven or hearth for cooking, cooking and eating utensils,
industrial enterprise for income outside agriculture, inputs for such
industries, and several other things like these. And, all these are available
from the villages themselves, from within the geography of those villages
[without the sign called ‘money’].

We made a list of what are available in these villages and their sources:

From rivers – fish, soil for earthenware, sand for frying muri (puffed rice),
etc.

From tanks – fish, vegetable leaf.

Ponds – wet earth, fuel by mixing this wet soil with coal dust, fruits,
vegetable leaf, flowers, googli, food for duck.

Pond-side – vegetable leaf, fuel.

Road-side – herbal medicines, grass as fodder for the cattle.

Forests and trees – herbal medicines, leaves for making plates, fruits,
flowers, honey, fuel, fodder for cattle, branches, etc., for making boundary
walls of houses, wood for furniture, things needed in agriculture, mats,
hats, rope, etc.
Soil – houses, utensils, cooking hearth, soil for making toys.

Field – fish, fodder for cattle, cow dung, fuel from that dung, tooth brush (majan), manure, etc.

From within the villages are found different ingredients for cottage industry, such as bamboo, wood, palm leaf, special grass types, seeds from certain fruits, different types of sticks, and so on. It is not that the industry is in village and its ingredients are coming from outside. The type of industry is decided upon on basis of what is available in the village. Whatever is found is used in the industry. It is not that the type of industry is decided beforehand and then its necessary ingredients are brought from outside. Whatever you are getting in the village, convert them into industrial substances.

Babui grass was there in the field. I had no previous thought about its use. The moment I thought as to how that variety of grass can be used, it resulted in a new form of work. Noticeable is this cycle of ingredient-work-product and product-work-ingredient.

The kinds of food, different other substances and ingredients are available without going to the market place, without buying, without any work in exchange of them (without the SIGN of MONEY), they can be collected.

There are no capitalist markets for these things; no selling and buying, and hence no [socially accepted] economy. And there is [socially unaccepted] economy. If the lifestyle and livelihood of the poor village people have any economy, then these things are portions of that economy. Most of the things that these village people need for their sustenance do not come from capitalist market (money based economy). Most such things
are collected from here and there. Had he to collect everything from market, he would fall miserably short of such things. If these places are actually dominated by the market, if these people have to procure everything from the market, a major portion of these village people will not be able to sustain them anymore.

Prior to colonial rule, private ownership of land and its idea was quite indefinite. It was well defined and recognized by law and the state during colonial rule; collection of taxes from individual land being the reason behind this. This ownership and possessedness is declared and recognized as legal, contractual, documented and modern.

But, despite everything, community and collective use of land prevailed, and still prevails, outside that private and state use of land; forest land, cattle grazing land, marshy areas, roads and roadsides, and all such... the idea of another type of possessedness outside that of private bourgeois ownership and state capitalist ownership, private possessedness and state possessedness.

It may appear to many as if a romantic and self-sufficient picture of the village society has been portrayed here. Still others may also be reminded of the ever going debate regarding the ‘self-sufficient village society’ in the ‘Indian’ sociological context. Such a reading is quite likely, but this paper does not talk about that. It has not attempted to depict the picture of peaceful and serene village land of West Bengal. These villages too are faced with violent political clashes, gender-violence, rape, harassment, infestation of blue-films, markets flooding with consumables from cities, satellite television, considerable presence of mobile phones, excessive use of
chemical fertilizers in agriculture, and, above all, deep desire for ‘city-like’ lifestyles. In this regard, Dipankar Gupta’s (2005) ‘Vanishing Village Society’ project may seem to be a very significant and contextual writing. Our answer, in this context, is – yes and no. We are saying two things at the same time. Villages are gradually becoming ‘citycentric; they are coming within the ambit of globalised capitalism and governmentality. Situations are no more as before, but trace remains. Still today, the villages have a different social reality; they exhibit a different social relation and a different economy as well. Only this is what we are trying to focus upon; which we have theoretically named as ‘possessedness’. Dipankar Gupta’s (2005) is a very city based view, and that is why he failed to locate the different picture exhibited by villages. He searched for the urban features in the villages; first city, and then the villages. Sanyal and Chatterjee (2007) are so deeply engrossed in a Foucauldian sphere that this alternative relation of the villages skipped/missed out their observation. For them, the working of the capitalism–governmentality continuum has become the chief question. For them, it is Michel Foucault first, and then the villages.

Private bourgeois ownership and state capitalist ownership, private possessedness and state possessedness – conception of another sort of possessedness outside these two has been the sole attempt of this long narration; such a conception of possessedness that does not contain any distinction of the Swakiya and parakiya, which is established on basis of the fitness for use (usability). We can, hence, revisit the question raised by Raghunath: If ‘possessedness’ (Svatva) is based on just fitness for use, then how does the swakiya-parakiya distinction hamper the possessedness (usability) of rice? How does the fitness for use of parakiya food cease to exist? (Bandopadhyaya, 2006). A little attention on our part will reveal that professor
Dasgupta’s portrayal of the specific picture of village also upholds this idea of possessedness. Picture of such a reality of ‘village society’ has been portrayed where meaning system and economy are defined on basis of fitness for use.

**7.8 Svatva (fit for use/usability) and Rent**

Bolan Gangopadhyay wrote on her return from Singur: In Singur I saw many such widows who have raised their children by just frying muri (puffed rice), grazing cattle, and preparing rice from paddy; or by occasionally growing cucumber or some other vegetables on the stray parts of lands and selling them in market” (2008). Now, if contract farming or industrial enterprises come up on such lands by of some multinational capitalist enterprise, can they anymore graze their cattle or grow such vegetables on such land? Even if they can, they will have to give ‘money’ to such multinational capitalist enterprise. Money has to be given for using any land under private ownership. Any land under control cannot be used for free. Land can no more be used in the sense of ‘fit for use’ once there is bourgeois private ownership over land. Else, it will be considered as illegal or, worse, theft. But keeping the land under control in this manner and earning money from that control (without any labor or further investment of capital) is not ‘theft’ in capitalist system.

Dasgupta (2004) has written: If the dominance of market really takes over these places, if all elements and all people are brought within the ambit of market, then a large portion of the village people will no more be able to sustain themselves any further. We could re-write it in this manner: If capital really starts dominating this space, if all elements and all people are brought within the ambit of capital, then a large portion of the village people cannot sustain themselves any more. Legal control
of bourgeois private ownership would no more allow stray use of the land; rather it would earn money from it by virtue of its control. “In fact, the process of acquiring control over markets can be seen, theoretically, as a part of PCA [Primitive Capital Accumulation]. The market constitutes a territory as much as land. On the basis of control over markets, capital appropriates rent, which is concealed as profit” (Basu, 2008: 42).

We, hence, come back again with that question again: Can the different welfare programs (read, the language of governmentality) heal the pain of separation-alienation-deviation, induced by Capitalism?

We will not give land for industry or contractual-farming, we will not use high yielding variety seeds, we will not apply chemical fertilizers in our fields, and nor will we accept any compensation…

What is the reason behind this ‘no’ from the peasants?

Is the reason behind this ‘no’ the knowledge of the peasants that several welfare programs can never be adequate replacements of the idea of ‘fit for use’ or Svatva?

Why did distinguished social scientists like Hardt and Negri (2004), Sanyal and Chatterjee (2007) fail to see these ‘no-saying’ peasants? Or, is it so that even on noticing, they try to translate their resistance in the language of governmentality?

What is the compulsion behind translating the protest of these no-saying, non-cooperative peasants in the language of governmentality?

We have seen that the land-relations, the people who live surrounding these lands – that is not, in a narrow sense, just the male peasants; that includes both the male and female peasants as well as their families and community lives; and this whole, in turn,
dwell along with the nature, rivers, soil, forests, insects, various birds and animals and even those small earth worms without whom it would be impossible to think of farming. Along with that, we have seen how the concept of ‘fit for use’ attaches a shape of simplified ‘whole’ to these complex relations. Capitalism tries to capture, suppress, foreclose, exclude and control this conception of svatva or possessedness.

The question is:

Are these two ideas – Capitalism and Svatva (Fit for use/usability) – in which manner (both in terms of meaning system and in terms of economics) mutually contradictory?

Why is Svatva intolerable for capitalism?

Ajit Chaudhury writes in 2003:

The French cut the throats of kings and landlord. The British silenced their voices. And Americans erased them from textbooks.

Yet, kings are deathless and so are the landlords. They haven’t died yet…

Land: land is the origin of the chief dispute of twenty first century.

Land: Beyond which is black diamond and black gold, and above the surface, black computer humans, well-educated, efficient, and innovative native people, who is just a metaphor of land.

And, economics and cultural studies are but names of erasing land.

But you can’t put erasure on land; the trace remains

(Chaudhury, 2003: 158) (Translation mine).

Land could at last be acquired in Singur; ‘peasants’ of Nandigram, on hearing about (read capitalist) development, have said ‘no’, state has failed in snatching land from them. This has, though only partially, made the capitalist aggression halt. Peasants of Kalinganagar too have been successful in resisting. Land is the main dispute. But
‘land’ does not mean just a geographical land-mass. Ajit Chaudhury (2003) uses land as a metaphor. It is like a radical break in the world of Marxist thought (Marxism is not just end of private ownership, not just struggle for power; Marxism is not just surplus labor). Ajit Chaudhury (2003) also opens up space for further debates on the question of colonial difference. Conceiving of land as a metaphor, earning rent by keeping land under ‘control’ – all these bring to fore a different analysis of capitalism. It seems as if Professor Chaudhury is rewriting Marx’s ‘Capital’, keeping in mind the question of cultural difference. He is writing the tale of extracting rent by keeping land under ‘control’, ‘colony has yet not ceased being’.

7.9 Conclusion

The year 2008, but this thought pattern has further extended by Pranab Basu. He writes:

Pre-existing rights are abrogated and a particular kind of private rights established through the process of primitive capital accumulation. Capital extracts rent on the basis of such occupancy [read private ownership over ‘Land’]… Rent is also extracted by exercising private property rights over knowledge, science, technology, seeds, etc. after these have been transformed into marketable commodities. The process of transforming these into marketable commodities is also primitive capital accumulation… Let us examine the significance of monopoly control over markets. On the basis of this control, Capital can manipulate prices. As a result, the prices of commodities purchased by capitalist enterprises from non-capitalist enterprises are fixed at levels such that almost the entire surplus produced outside the capitalist sector (for example, within the
cottage industry sector) is approached by the capitalist sector as a rent
(Basu, 2008: 94, 82, 80).

Basu has written an entire book on rent, and I would not try attempting a summary of his work through this small quote. Neither do we plan to express the complications at page 231 with the aid of just a few words. That would be a gross injustice towards his work. Reading his work gave me this impression that he has come up with a new discourse of ‘primitive accumulation’. This is not the old orthodox Marxist discourse; not just the alienation of producer from modes of production and conversion into wage labor; the instance of cottage industry as has been used in the quote could also be replaced by agriculture. The globalised capitalist enterprises keep the market under their control in such a manner that price remains fixed at a static rate; i.e. contractual farming gives the peasants less price that what they ought to get and the profit that the globalised capitalist enterprises enjoy because of this less price is their ‘rent’. Peasants, thus, are as if alienated from even their own land, ‘market constitutes a territory as much as land’ – all under the control of globalised capitalist enterprise. Peasants keep themselves busy with not just farming; they also create seeds for the next farming season. The nature of this seed depends on the local geographical features. This kind of seed is the product of peasant’s own knowledge – a knowledge passed from one generation to another. This seed is stored; changes brought in accordance with the situation, and bettered than before. Everyone uses this knowledge form (‘fit for use’). Things were going on like this. New patent law came into being through introduction of Dunkel proposal, GATT agreement, etc. As a result, globalised capitalist enterprises are getting patent for several of these seeds. Seeds which were ‘local’ are now coming under the patent of some capitalist. Now, if
some peasant wants to use that seed, s/he will have to pay the price for that seed to the multinational capitalist enterprise. The additional earning of the multinational capitalist enterprise without investment of further labor or capital is their ‘rent’. They are earning rent by just keeping the seed under their patent. Had we remained steadfast with the concept of ‘Svātva’ or fit for use/usability, would it be possible to earn rent in this manner?