CHAPTER - VIII

EMERGING TRENDS IN AGRARIAN RELATIONS
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Social sciences play significant role in policy formulations. Since independence, Indian agriculture has undergone several changes and the process was accelerated by the new agricultural strategy adopted in mid-sixties with the introduction of High Yielding Variety seeds followed by fertilizers, agro-chemicals and farm mechanization. This has resulted into the Green Revolution which has been studied from various perspectives by various scholars (Francel, 1969; Aggarwal, 1973; Ladejinsky, 1973; Bhalla, 1974; Bhalla, 1976; Farmer, 1977; Alexander, 1982; Karnath, 1987 and Ahlawat, 1988). The present study is focused on the changes in agrarian relations because of the impact of Green Revolution, by comparing the changes with traditional agrarian relations. Based on the empirical findings, discussed in earlier chapters, an effort has been made in this chapter to bring out emerging trends which may be useful for planning and policy making in the context of recent economic policy of commercialisation, liberalisation and globalisation of agriculture. Specific focus is on the different interest groups, i.e., agrarian categories, with overall focus on their relations in the pursuit of agriculture.

Irrespective of the agrarian categories and size of landholdings there may be an increased use of elements of Green Revolution. High Yielding Variety seeds are the first to be
adopted followed by fertilizers, agro-chemicals and farm mechanization with increased availability of irrigation facilities. This trend was also reported by Alexander (1982) in Ganganagar district of Rajasthan where with the increasing irrigation the Green Revolution proliferated and the use of different inputs increased significantly. It is expected that this process may continue in other regions of the country.

Green Revolution has been instrumental in reducing rural poverty by increased productivity and production. Though it has increased inequalities by benefitting landowners more than labourers which has also led to social tensions. Inequalities leading to polarisation and then to social tension have also been found (Brown, 1970; Frankel, 1971; Byres, 1972; Singh and Singh, 1975 and Rudra, 1978).

The motive of production may invariably be to maximise the surplus produce for market; and the mode of production may become more capitalistic in nature. The subsistence type of economy is being replaced by market economy and agriculture may not continue to be a way of life. It is expected that the agriculture may also acquire some of the characteristics of industry. Singh (1989) has reported the emergence of capitalistic mode of production and maximization of marketable surplus in Punjab agriculture. Changes in these aspects have also been highlighted (Rai et al., 1989).

Farming lobbies may become stronger, if given political patronage and leverage, and may influence the political power
under democratic system. Three main interest groups emerging in agrarian economy may be the input and service-supplying agencies, the farm product producers and the agricultural labourers who become more solidified to meet their economic interests.

The rigidity of caste based agrarian hierarchy with lower caste labourers at the bottom and the higher caste landlords at the top may not continue as such. Since the labourers may not like to accept their inferior social status as part of traditional scheme with in-built value system. The relations may be more contractual and mutually agreed upon rather than the traditionally caste based.

In work organisation, the occasional joint cultivation seems to be disappearing. This has been replaced by the hiring in of tractor for ploughing, harvesting, threshing. Community relations and interdependence for performing agricultural relations has undergone substantial changes. In adjoining state Punjab, which uses higher quantum of elements of Green Revolution, Judge (1991) also found the disappearance of joint cultivation.

The traditional jajmani system may not be much operative and functional in agricultural sector. But as far as religious and ceremonial occasions are concerned a few service castes, specially the Brahmin and the Nai, might continue to perform rites and rituals as compared to other castes. Other service castes may have little role to play in agriculture, therefore, they may shift to other occupations also. Long back in 1973,
Aggarwal reported that the jajmani system has nearly gone out of vogue in Punjab. Even in Rajasthan it may outlive its utility (Saxena, 1989).

Tractorisation is likely to create more job, such as, mechanic, agricultural implements manufacturers, welders, semi-skilled labourers, etc. On the other hand, it is likely to increase employment by stimulating greater intensity of cropping and, enhancing the intensity of farm practices per crop e.g. higher number of irrigation, ploughing and weedings. Increased employment and job avenues have also been found in Punjab due to more use of tractors (Randhawa, 1977 and Grewal and Rangi, 1981). Complete mechanization may replace man power, thereby may create unemployment. Mechanization of agriculture strengthened the process of alienation, undermined the role and relation of jajmani system, which appeared assuming contractual form. Economic and individualistic attitude appeared to be gaining dominance over the community feeling and urban orientation appear to be emerging.

Size of landholding may decrease due to population pressure, urbanisation, industrialisation, land reforms and other exogenous and endogenous factors. There is every likelihood of becoming a large number of marginal holdings economically unviable in near future, if traditional crops are grown. These may become viable with commercialisation of agriculture and technological advancement with reference to commercial crops such as, vegetables, cereals, spices, mushroom, etc.
Wholly-owned and self-operated holdings may increase in record but in actual practice lease in/lease out land may increase due to decrease in size of landholding to an unviable extent. Mixed kind of tenants may dominate and the actual operational holdings may increase in near future.

Present state of affairs of agriculture and liberalisation of economy may displace the large number of small and marginal farmers, whose holdings may become unsustainable with existing level of technology and crops. These landholders may join the rank of agricultural labourers. Reverse tenancy is likely to increase as was observed by Singh in 1989 in Punjab. The traditional class of large landowners of dominating castes with political supremacy in the village communities is likely to loose their grip over the rural community.

One of the most upcoming feature of the non-cultivating owners may be the preponderance of government servants and professionals, getting their land cultivated either through their family members or the hired labourers. This category was showing its emergence in every village, specifically in the Green Revolution region where cultivation was a profitable proposition. Thus the non-cultivating owners may decrease in number also. The traditional class of non-cultivating owners comprising of the business castes were showing lesser interest in cultivation and were selling their lands. These business castes may continue the process of selling their land and invest that amount in their business in cities and towns. The only motivation for retaining land by businessmen, traders,
professionals and others rich people may be getting exemption from income and wealth tax under the prevailing laws.

Whatever might be the motive of retaining land by the absentee non-cultivating owners, they are most likely to lease out their land on cash rent with increasing intensity of Green Revolution and commercialisation of the agriculture resulting in higher rental value. Moreover, the changing social relationships may also force them to do so in order to retain their landed property and to receive more economic gains in term of trait of written agreement does not affect them adversely they would like to go for that to avoid any conflicts.

Besides the existence of pure self-cultivators there is likelihood of continuance or emergence of several variants of self-cultivators as discussed below:
(a) Supervisory cultivators may be those who are either having enough land or are not able to cultivate themselves. They may get their land cultivated by hired labour under their direct supervision. But they themselves may not be involved in physical labour. Such farmers are likely to decrease.
(b) Part-time self-cultivators may be the petty government servants posted near their land. They may invest in agriculture to augment their family income and use surplus family labour. They may heavily depend on the hired labour, may invest heavily inputs; bring innovations and may use institutional finance and assistance. Another variant in this sub-category may be of the farmers purely depending on hired labour with cultivation under their supervision.
(c) Partial cultivators are the medium and large size landowner, having sound financial position and farm machinery, especially, the tractor and its implements. They may augment their operational landholding by leasing in land on cash rent and further lease out in small pieces after ploughing and sowing on cash rent or crop share basis. They may like to make the best use of their farm machinery. In commercial farming areas, number of such farmers may increase.

(d) Self-cultivators cum tenants may dominate the agrarian scene with decreasing size of landholding and dispossession of land by marginal and small farmers sub-category may mainly be composed of medium size landowners with sound financial resources and farm power and machinery. They may lease in land to increase size of operational holding to make the best use of their resources. They may prefer to lease in only on cash rent basis so that they can cultivate according to their plan.

(f) Self-cultivators cum labourer may be the small and marginal landholders residing in the village itself. They may cultivate small pieces themselves with the family labour and may augment their income by working as labourers. Mostly likely, this group may have the motive of meeting the family requirements.

The most disguised agrarian category may be of the tenants, as the landowner may not like to enter the tenant's name in revenue records. This agrarian category may decrease with decreasing size of landholding and increasing profitability due to Green Revolution in agriculture. Moreover, the land
reforms may discourage this agrarian category. With the spread of Green Revolution more and more tenants may be ejected and more and more landowners may resume self cultivation. The motive of production of the non-ejected tenants maybe to maximize output and profitability under the cash rent system, which provides them full liberty to maximise the productivity by using HYV seeds, fertilizers, agro-chemical and other technological inputs. Thus, the mode of production of such tenants may be capitalistic in nature heavily based on family and hired labour.

Traditional system of crop sharing is most likely to be replaced by cash rent system with proliferation of Green Revolution. Decreasing risk of failure of crop with irrigation intensification may accelerate the process of change in mode of payments. Similarly, the social composition of tenants is to undergone discernable changes with the entry of higher caste landless farmers in their rank.

Tenancy period may decrease and may depend on the specific crops, e.g., short duration tomato, brinjal, okra, cut flowers, zeera, mushroom, etc. Their relations would be of contractual type. In commercial farming areas a sub-class of tenants, leasing in specific crop may increase. Ideologically this agrarian category may be more radical as compared to the landowners. Since they may not have the ownership of land under the changing circumstances, there is every likelihood of their organisation to protect their economic interests. The traditional relations of obligatory nature likely to be replaced by
more contractual relations. Moreover, with the changing social composition of tenants category the dominating relations of landlords may decline to a large extent.

In the wake of Green Revolution/commercialisation of agriculture and new agricultural policy, the following sub-category of tenants may emerge:

(a) With the Green Revolution and commercialisation of agriculture, a new category of enterprising pure tenants may also emerge on agrarian scene. These may be enterpreneurs having sound financial background farm power and machinery and creditibility. They may lease in reasonably sufficient land for cultivation on cash rent basis. It is assumed that these enterprising tenants may in no way be lesser in income than the self-cultivator of medium size.

(b) Tenants cum owner cultivators having small piece of their own land to be augmented with leased in land, to make the best use of their farm power and machinery, by primarily depending on lease in land. They may be much similar to pure tenants in respect of motive and mode of production.

(c) Crop tenants may emerge around the urban centres where the landowner may lease out standing crop after performing specific operation of land preparation, ploughing, and sowing. These tenants may perform all other operations and may also invest that particular crop. Their motive may be maximisation of the profit.
Green Revolution is likely to extend its scope to other regions and consequently commercial farming may take place. The nature of cultivation may require more labour man-days and that too at appropriate time. This may bring the cultivators at the doorstep of labourers who were earlier having very poor bargaining capacity. The landowners may not expect any kind of begar from the labourers as expected in the past.

Green Revolution, commercialisation, globalisation of agriculture and privatisation in agriculture sector may need more and more skilled labourers than the unskilled ones. Wage earnings of skilled labourers are comparatively higher and this is mostly likely to continue. Therefore, there may be more need of trained agricultural labourers in different semi-skilled and skilled operation of modern agriculture.

The traditional social composition of agricultural labourer is likely to change under forces of population growth, dispossession of land by marginal farmers and lack of job avenues. Higher caste people may also join the labour force. Labour immigration would also increase from lesser developed regions.

The terms and conditions of labour employment may become more contractual than traditional obligatory. Whenever labourers may be employed on wage and time basis, both the wages and time may be regulated more by labour laws than the will of employer. This may also lead to organisation of agricultural labourers to protect their interests. The lower
castes form majority of the agricultural labourers and this composition may also change with the induction of higher caste people but this deprived section may remain the pawn of political parties under the democratic system. Their politicisation on one hand may increase their bargaining capacity and aspiration but on the other hand this process may lead to conflicting situations. The traditionally accepted value inequalities are likely to decrease.

† Contractual labourers may increase as both the farmer and the labourer may like this system. Mutually satisfying contracts would meet the carrying out different specialised agricultural operations like transplantation, harvesting, threshing, picking, etc. This may lead to formation of some labour groups for specialised operations as is evident in construction and industrial sector.

† Casual labourers employed on the basis of time and wage may remain limited to governmental and institutional works which may be regulated by the labour laws. In modern agriculture, this kind of labour arrangements may not be preferred by majority of cultivators

Traditional permanent labourers (Sanji/siri) with share in produce may also not be preferred by both the parties. This system may be replaced by either contractual or permanent labourers employed on annual basis paid in lumpsum or monthly. Farmers may like to keep them on the farm itself.
Green Revolution has benefitted all the sections with varying magnitude thereby accentuated in inequalities and created social tensions at much lower rate. The subsistence type of economy based on family labour has transformed into the market type of economy with hired labour. Further modernisation of agriculture may need more capital investment and timely performance of agriculture operations. Decreasing size of landholdings may lead to dispossession of land by very small and marginal farmers who may ultimately swell the rank of agricultural labourers. Under different contexts and situations several new agrarian categories like supervisory cultivator part-time self-cultivator, partial cultivators, self-cultivators cum tenants, self-cultivators cum labourers, enterprising pure tenants, tenant cum owner cultivators, crop tenants and contractual or annual permanent labourers are likely to emerge. Relationship among different agrarian categories are transforming from the traditional obligatory to informal, mutually satisfying and contractual. This process is likely to continue. Social composition of different categories is also changing from domination of a specific caste group to multicastrs. Specialised groups for agricultural operation may emerge like those in other sectors. Patron-client relationships of jajmani system are feeding away and the socially accepted value inequalities may also diminish. There is an urgent need to integrate these emerging agrarian categories in agricultural policy and developmental programme.