CHAPTER II

PEASANT MOVEMENTS: A FRAME WORK FOR STUDY
(a) **Definition and Scope of the Study**

An attempt will be made in the present chapter to analyze the nature and pattern of peasant uprisings in India during the period of British occupation. In particular, emphasis will be placed on the role of peasantry in the context and evolution of agrarian movements during the first phase of the British period namely, the Pre-Nationalist Era (1757-1857). To begin with, it may be mentioned that the peasantry in India had a long history and tradition of armed uprisings, the earliest of which had begun in the last decade of the Moghul rule. In fact, for almost 200 years, the Indian peasantry, in all major regions of the country, had repeatedly risen in revolt against "their land-lords, revenue agents and other bureaucrats, money-lenders, police and military forces."¹ Further, during the course of Indian history, certain areas had acquired a strong tradition of agrarian rebellions such as the districts of Maymensingh, Dinajpur, Rangpur and Pabna (presently in Bangladesh), the Santhal regions of Bihar and West Bengal, the tribal areas of Andhra Pradesh and a large tract in the state of Kerala. These agrarian uprisings,

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¹ Kathleen Gough, "Indian Peasant Uprisings", *Economic and Political Weekly* (Bombay), vol.9, Special Number August 1974, p.1412.
however, had taken place "in response to relative deprivation of unusually severe economic character and often involving physical brutality or ethnic persecution." The political independence of the country in 1947, however, has not brought much improvements in the scenario as oppression by local property-owners have continued to produce "poverty, famine, agricultural sluggishness and agrarian unrest" in India.²

By way of introduction, it may be observed that the studies on agrarian uprisings have been regarded as "variants" of social movements in India. In fact, these symptoms represent major forms of "rural protest" in India.³ As far as the concept of "rural protest" is concerned, it refers to the resistance efforts made by the peasantry to extricate itself from the exploitation of its surpluses in agricultural production by superiors in the hierarchy of rural society.⁴ As regards the definition of Indian peasantry, according to general understanding, he is a person "who lives in a rural area and who works predominantly in agriculture, wholly or in part for his livelihood". Thus, the Indian context, the category of peasantry would include, the agricultural labourers, share-coppers, tenants, rural artisans as well as marginal and small farmers.⁵

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2. For details see Ibid, pp.1411-1412.
3. Puspendra Surana, Social Movements and Social Structure (Delhi, 1983), p.3.
It may be appropriate to mention that the studies on social movements have become quite vast as it has come to embrace a variety of activities relating to youth, women, labour, peasants, racial minorities, political parties, religious, educational, institutional and organizational movements. But essentially, the social movement studies take into account factors such as, "change, stability and resistance" as their major focus for analysis. At the same time it has become rather difficult to provide a standard definition for the concept of "social movement" in view of the varied nature and wide scope of study as mentioned above. In fact, it is generally assumed that a social movement is a "collective action of human beings to change, stabilize or resist the social or the cultural order they have either inherited or evolved." All such activities, however, are "characterized by a goal, an ideology, communication, leadership, strategy and a wide range of participation." Social movements also relate to "the will and ability of the people to look at themselves in a desired perspective at a given time and place and in a continuous process". But, according to Puspendra Surana, social movements have generally been viewed as ideal types as they have been categorized as "general or

specific, revolutionary or reformist, messianic cults, ideological, organizational, charismatic, institutional and extensive, revitalistic and naturalistic, norm-oriented, and value-oriented counter-movements." However, such categorizations have proved inadequate as more and more movements have been observed by social scientists which exhibit some characteristics of each of the types but would not fall exclusively into any one of the types as presented above. Making categorization of social movements, thus, appear to be a hazardous task.

A close perusal of the writings on peasant uprisings clearly indicate two distinct trends. Firstly, these works have been written by persons with a variety of interests such as historians, social anthropologists, activists, and leaders of socio-political movements. For instance, while scholars like Hamza Alavi, Peasants and Revolution (1965), Jean Chesneaux, Peasant Revolt in China (1973), L.Natarajan, Peasant Uprisings in India (1953), Majid Siddique, Agrarian Unrest in North India (1978) and Jogesh Chandra Bagal, Peasant Revolution in Bengal (1953) are basically historians, other like Teodor Shanian, Peasant and Peasant Societies (1971) and Kathleen Gough, Peasant Uprisings in India (1974) are social anthropologists. As for N.G.Ranga, Revolutionary Peasants (1949) and P.Sundarayya, Telengana People's Struggle and Its Lessons (1972).

10. For details see Surana, n.3, p.3.

A second major trend concerning the works on peasant movements had been the fact that many of these authors have not sought to strike any distinction between peasant rebellions and political movements concerning national independence. In fact, for most of them, these words are rather synonymous and can be used interchangeably. In this context it may be illustrated while in some cases the rich land-lords had joined hands with the lower agrarian classes in anti-imperialist national movements, in most other cases the actions of landed upper classes had prompted agrarian revolts in India. Despite this confusion,
A broad consensus seems to have emerged concerning the term peasant movement. As stated by D.N. Dhanagare, it is a blanket term which refers to "all kinds of collective attempts of different strata of the peasantry either to change the system or to seek redress for particular grievances without necessarily aiming at overthrowing the system." According to Puspendra Surana, the term "peasant movement" refers to such movements as are based on agrarian needs, that "seek salvation from suppression by political lords, aim at the redressal of grievances, want to share a part of the power or overthrow the whole power hierarchy and through these achievements, want to change their social structure." Out of these trends have emerged a consensus concerning the terms, "rebellion", "uprising", "insurrection" and "revolts." In fact, these are terms which could be used interchangeably implying that, "though falling short of a full revolution in a modern and contemporary sense, they involve large-scale peasant violence as a part of resistance."

To begin with our analysis, it may be stated that social scientists in India have strong tendency to interpret socio-political movements involving the peasantry in a class

13. For further study on the subject see A.R. Desai, Social Background of Indian Nationalism (Bombay, 1966), pp.174-200.
14. For details see Dhanagare, n.11, p.20.
framework which is rooted in Marxism. But the position of Karl Marx in this regard had been somewhat complex and full of ambiguities. For instance, Marx described the peasantry as a secondary social class and as one essentially outside the class system of capitalist society. At the same time he entertained the hope that the peasantry would work as an ally of the industrial proletariat during the course of their struggle against the bourgeoisie. But after the fiasco of the 1848 Revolution (where the French peasantry had not supported their working class energetically), Marx denounced the peasantry as a "sack of potatoes that lack inter-connections, common political identity and organizations" and as "representing barbarism in the midst of civilization." Such portrayal, however, can not be an appropriate characterization of the peasantry in general. It may be specifically related to the role played by the French peasantry during the revolution of 1848.

A more balanced view on the peasantry, however, had been provided by F.Engels. According to him, "farm labourers", rather than "tenant farmers" were the natural allies of the industrial proletariat. At the same time Engels had portrayed a dark feature of the peasantry as being "internally split, unorganized and politically important" if they were not backed by the organized class.

As for Lenin, his experience of the Russian condition had prompted him to bring about a successful alliance between the peasantry and the working class. In the process the revolutionary potential of the peasantry had been fully exploited in a more concrete form.  

The classical notion of peasantry as well as its modification by Lenin, however, have been challenged by some Marxist leaders in China, Mexico, Algeria, Cuba and Vietnam. For instance, in China the peasantry under the leadership of Mao-Tse Tung had played a decisive role in the Chinese Revolution of 1949. Further they formed the great bulk of revolutionary force as well as the party cadre of the country in the subsequent period. The successful outcome of the peasant revolutions in Mexico, Algeria, Cuba and Vietnam have demonstrated further the revolutionary potential of the peasantry. In fact, the revolutionary potential of the peasantry have been most aptly described by the Algerian activist F. Fanon:

... In the Colonial countries, peasants alone are revolutionary, for they have nothing to lose and everything to gain. The starving peasant, outside the class system, is the first among the exploited

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18. For details see V.I. Lenin, *What is To Be Done* (Moscow, 1969), pp.78-93.
to discover that only violence pays. For him, there is no compromise, no possible coming to terms, colonization and de-殖民ization are simply a question of relative strength ... 21

D.N. Dhanagare, sums up the scenario by stating that the issue of whether or not the peasantry has the revolutionary potential should be substituted by addressing one self to three questions, namely, "What role do different classes of peasantry in a society play in revolutionary and non-revolutionary movements", and "what kind of social structure and historical circumstances are conducive to peasant revolts or movements" and also, "why does the mobilization of peasantry at one time or place lead to peaceful or constitutional agitations, but assumes an insurrectionary or rebellious form in another place and time". 22 All these three questions prompt me to analyze the nature and role of peasantry in the International context.

(b) Nature and Role of Peasantry: The International Setting

A perusal into the peasant uprisings and movements all over the world clearly indicate the fact that these are mostly based on redressal activities of the peasantry and other suppressed classes or castes (aligned to the peasants or any other social group) which is affected by the activities of the

22. For details see Dhanagare, n.11, p.4.
agrarian world. The peasant movements, as stated earlier, refer to such insurrections and movements that are based on agrarian needs, and which seek salvation from the suppression of the political lords as well as redressal of their grievances. At the same time the leaders of these agrarian movements seek to share a part of the power and if possible to overthrow the whole power hierarchy and in the process they seek to change the social structure as well. For instance, the peasantry had engaged itself in political and liberation movements as it had happened in case of Mexico, China, Peru and to some extent in India.23

As regards the nature and the role of the peasantry, two unquestionable authorities in the field namely, Barrington Moore, Jr. and Eric R. Wolf, had analyzed the international setting as follows. According to Barrington Moore, "a previous history of subordination to a landed upper class recognised and enforced in the laws, sharp cultural distinctions and a considerable degree of de-facto possession of the land" are the main distinguishing features of a peasantry.24 According to Eric R. Wolf, the peasant is a rural cultivator "who raises crops and livestock in the country side, but who does not operate his enterprise in the economic sense". He also transfers his services to a dominant group of rulers. But the peasant is

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23. For details see Eric R. Wolf, n.20, pp.3-158. Also see L. Natarajan, Peasant Uprisings in India: 1850-1900 (Bombay, 1953), pp.7-67.
"ordinarily a religious person who observes a number of ceremonies and festivals". In fact, the religious sanctions, ceremonies and beliefs have shaped his ideological outlook. Thus, the peasants, according to Wolf, are "a population that make autonomous decisions with regard to the process of cultivation. The category of peasantry, thus, covers the tenants and share-croppers as well as owner-operators who make relevant decisions on how their crops are to be grown. It does not include the fishermen and the landless labourers."26

Apart from Moore and Wolf, Teodor Shanin has also provided a definition concerning the peasantry. According to him, the peasantry "consists of small agricultural producers who with the help of small equipment and the labour of their families produce mainly for their own consumption and for the fulfilment of obligations to the holders of political and economic power."27 Also, according to Henry A. Landsberger, these characteristics predominate the peasantry namely, their legal subordination, their cultural distinctiveness as well as their de-facto possession of the land.28

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25. For details see Wolf, n.20, pp.289-293.
26. Ibid.
As regards the nature of peasantry, the historical experience has demonstrated that given an opportunity a peasant is as "rational and perceptive and receptive as any other element in rural or urban societies." But the main difference between various category of peasantry, lies in the fact of "the inability of the rural poor (with meagre resources in land and capital) to take risks in adopting innovations required for participation in mass action". Also, oppressive agrarian structures "have impeded the participation, especially of tenants, share-croppers and agricultural labourers in mass action due to their dependence on the rural elite in times of need". In fact, according to A.N. Seth, "It will be required to evolve peasant organizations to carry out the agrarian struggles in an effective manner." 29

The peasants, as stated earlier, are deeply rooted in religion and are ceremony-oriented in their outlook. According to Kathleen Gough, many of the peasant movements are "religion-based". 30 As regards its role while, according to Lenin, "the peasants are capable of effecting change", 31 in the opinion of Barrington Moore, however, the peasantry "serves as an agent of revolution or change". 32 Thus, all peasant movements are "based on agitations and upsurges, and that they proceed in stages and group rapidly in tradition oriented societies with sudden demands". 33

31. Lenin, What is to Be Done, n. 18, p. 93.
32. Barrington Moore, n. 24, p. 83.
33. Ibid, p. 84.
A peasant movement, in fact, may appeal to some segments or strata of a peasant society described as the "middle peasant". This concept needs some elaboration as it has raised some controversy in the academic circles due to its varying interpretations.

It was Lenin who first devised the concept, "middle peasant" as distinguished from the poor peasant and the well-to-do peasant bourgeoisie. According to Lenin, the position of middle peasant in the rural social structure has become most unstable as their income has become lower than their average expenditure. Further, according to Lenin, due to the process of de-peasantization, the middle peasant category has been swept away and in the process, the position of the extreme ones namely, the peasant bourgeoisie and the rural proletariat have been reinforced. Also, according to him, a small minority of middle peasants could enter the top group successfully, while the bulk had to remain in the bottom category by the process of social revolution.34

It was Mao-Tse Tung, who made further elaboration on the concept. According to him, the middle peasant refers to "those who own land or own only part of the land and rent the rest and also those who own no land of their own and rent all their land." According to Mao, the middle peasant derives "two incomes wholly or mainly from his labour and as a rule does

34. For details see V.I. Lenin, Development of Capitalism in Russia (Moscow, 1960), pp.183-185.
exploit others, in many cases he himself is exploited by others having to pay in land rent and in interest on loans". Further, according to him, the poor peasant is more revolutionary than the middle peasant.  

Hamza Alavi and Eric R. Wolf have made further contributions concerning the concept of "middle peasant". According to Hamza Alavi, the concept consists of independent small-holders who differ quite qualitatively from the "landlord-tenant" or from the sector of "capitalist-farmers" and rich peasants due to their militancy in approach. Such an approach, however, emanates from the fact that unlike the poor peasant, they enjoy freedom and structural independence as they have been liberated from feudal bonds. Thus, according to Alavi, it was the initiative and militancy on the part of middle peasantry that paved for the success of Communist Revolution in China.  

Elaborating further, Eric R. Wolf has put stress on the fact that the middle peasant is "free from structural links and bondages in matters of land control and has both a tactical 


mobility and sufficient internal leverage to enter into a sustained rebellion". Describing the character of middle peasants he states:

... The middle peasant presents a curious paradox in the sense that he is the reservoir of peasant tradition, institution and conservatism, and at the same time he is the instrument of dynamiting the peasant social order... 

Thus, while in case of Lenin and Mao, the position of the middle peasant is found closer to the poor peasant, both Alavi and Wolf have portrayed the middle peasant as more akin to the rich peasantry. Also, while according to Lenin and Mao, the middle peasant has a petty bourgeoisie frame of reference, the middle peasantry, according to Wolf, has a conservative political outlook and that he resorts to radical action to preserve the "status quo". However, by way of summing up the situation, Dhanagare has stated that the concept has great relevance for India. According to him, the peasant movements in our country have taken the character of peaceful and constitutional agitation such as the "No Rent", "No Tax Campaign", "Satyagraha" and "Social Boycott". In fact, these movements are ideologically inherent in the middle peasant concept, Dhanagare concludes.

39. For details see Dhanagare, n.11, pp.11-12.
It may be mentioned that peasant movements have taken place in such countries as Mexico, Cuba, Algeria, Russia, China, Vietnam, Germany, Peru, Chile, France, Spain, Angola, French Guinea and Mozambique during the twentieth century. Eric Wolf made a comparative assessment of these uprisings. A close perusal into these insurrections, indicate that peasants all over the world have been fighting hard for their existence and relief from exploitative structures as represented by the landlords and money-lenders. Such a picture has been clearly evident in Mexico, Russia, Vietnam, Algeria, Peru and in Chile. In fact, agrarian movements in these countries have been based on the land hunger of the peasantry, i.e., acquisition of new land or better land for cultivation. On the other hand peasant revolts in Germany, Angola, French Guinea, Mozambique, Spain and France, had been organized to fight against social injustice in the form of suppression and exploitation. In fact, according to Wolf, such concerns have not been found very expressive and dominant in the cases of Mexico, China, Cuba and Vietnam. However, in Peru, Chile and Algeria, these symptoms had remained more or less "covert" and "under-expressed". In fact, the over-all focus behind these movements had been both "ideological" and "utopian" in the sense that they had kept an eye to develop ideal types of societies in their respective countries, "free from interference, suppression and exploitation".

40. For details see Wolf, n.20, pp.211-250.
41. For details see Ibid, pp.103-158.
As mentioned earlier, agrarian revolutions had been launched successfully and that the revolutionary potential of the peasantry had been well-acknowledged. But in most cases, it had been observed that the exploited peasantry had functioned as a suitable ally of the working classes which had spearheaded most of these movements. The rationale for such alliance, according to Barrington Moore, had been the structure of power alignments and class alliances that had operated in a given society at a particular time. For instance, "while in England the peasants have proved themselves to be non-revolutionary and have been whisked out by the rapidly-growing rural capitalism, in France on the other hand, the peasants have aligned themselves with the urban middle class that has guaranteed them private property, a concession which is fundamental to the peasantry of that country." Summing up the whole situation, Dhanagare had stated rather aptly that the "nature of power structure and alignment of social classes have largely determined the form in which the revolutionary potential of any class have ultimately manifested itself to contribute to social change."43

It may be appropriate to mention that Barrington Moore had provided a framework of analysis concerning various types of revolutionary manifestations as prevalent in different countries of the world. He had categorized them into three "ideal type routes" to radical change and modernization namely, the Bourgeois-Democratic Revolution (England, France and the United States), the

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42. For details see Moore, n.24, pp.101-110.
43. Dhanagare, n.11, p.4.
Fascist Revolution (Germany and Japan) and the Communist Revolution (Russia and China). Such models, had received wide-scale acceptance. To begin with, Paul M. Sweezy, A Major Social Scientist opines that "the revolutionary role and leadership of a certain social class is essentially the product of historical circumstances and objective forces" and that "no revolutionary path is immutable or invariable." Also, concurring with Moore, Teodor Shanin maintains that "the whole question of revolutionary potential of a certain social class must be treated as historical, i.e., temporary, relative and changing".

In conclusion, it may be stated that the peasant leadership all over the world have been influenced by three ideological trends namely, the Marxian, the Nationalist and the Social Reformist. While the situation in Russia, Peru, and Cuba have been influenced by Marxian ideology and its different manifestations, nationalist ideologies attracted the peasant leaders of Mexico, Vietnam and Angola. The social-reformist ideology, however, has highlighted the utopian concept, namely, "A Better Society" for the people of a country. It had, in fact, influenced the thinking of the social reformers like Nuerta and Obeaga in Mexico as well as Mahatma Gandhi and Sardar Ballav Bhai Patel in India.

44. For details see Moore, n.24, pp.314-315.
It is in this international setting that the nature and pattern of peasant movements in India during the British period will be analyzed.

(c) Peasant Uprisings in Colonial India: A Framework for Analysis

A close perusal into the peasant uprisings during the British period indicates certain distinct trends. To begin with, the historical experience in India has demonstrated that given an opportunity, a peasant is as rational, perceptive and receptive as any other element in rural and urban societies. The main problem, however, lies in the fact that the rural poor (with meagre resources in land capital) is unable to take risks in adopting innovations required for participation in mass action. This is due to the oppressive agrarian structure in rural India which often impeded the participation, (especially of tenants, share-croppers and agricultural labourers) in mass action (in view of their total dependence on the rural elites in times of need). Agrarian reforms held the key in terms of bringing about amelioration of their conditions through tenancy legislation, ceiling and land redistribution as well as regulation of wages and conditions or rural agricultural workers. But these efforts often failed to yield results due to lack of political will on the part of the elite as well as absence of pressures from below namely, from the rural poor. The role of peasant organizations is vital in this regard as they could function as a lobby for poor
peasants and they also generated pressures from below for the required agrarian reforms. The role of peasant organizations during the British period, however, has not been significant to carry forward the agrarian struggles in India.  

A second major feature was the close inter-relationship between peasant movements and social movements as described earlier. In fact, peasant movements were social movements which called for reforms or sought to bring about a change in the relationships between the peasants/landlords/government/money-lenders in both social and political terms. The peasant movements like any other movement was goal-oriented and based on certain ideology and organizations, had developed their own typical communication patterns leadership and strategies. The movement also seeks to unify the peasantry in a particular region and tries to develop both its leadership and ideological dimensions. In the process a peasant elite class did emerge, which kept direct contact with the peasant alliance system all over the world. In the process peasant movements not only sought the material or economic salvation for the classes, but sought to create a stir in the total relationship pattern of that community vis-a-vis the rural society. For instance, the acts of suppression by the ruling and landed gentry brought about unification among the peasantry and the aligned groups. The social

48. For details see A.N. Seth, n.29, pp.18-20.
dimensions of the peasant movement, thus served as a force for changing the social structure of a community. 49

A third major feature was the advent of British Colonialism, which brought about momentous transformation in the socio-economic realms of India. This was manifest in the introduction of the new land systems, the heavy land revenue demand, legal and political changes, the destruction of indigenous industries as well as the disintegration of age-old union between agriculture and industry. Further, India's economy and agriculture underwent a commercial revolution, a process, which was not accompanied by an Industrial Revolution in the country. 50 As a result, a new agrarian structure came into being with new classes, namely, absentee landlords, and landlords at the top and tenants-at-will, share-croppers, and agricultural labourers at the bottom. This period also witnessed an un-precedented growth of tenancy and a hierarchy of intermediaries between the state and the actual cultivator. 51 This period also witnessed the emergence and growth of commercial bourgeoisie as well as pressures exerted on the peasantry to sell products only to the merchant in order to meet his payments to the government, landlord and the money-lender. 52 In the process the money-lender became a

49. For details see Surana, A Study of Mewar, n. 47, p. 35.
50. See Bipan Chandra, Nationalism and Colonism in Modern India (Delhi, 1979), p. 329.
52. For details see Bipan Chandra, n. 50, pp. 330-332.
major appropriator of agricultural surplus as well as in the rural economy. 

A final major feature of the Colonial period was the emergence of a high degree of internal differentiation within the peasantry. For instance, at the top remained the distinct class of rich peasants (both owners as well as protected tenants) who benefited enormously from commercialization of agriculture as well as from money-lending and trade. Below them remained a class of middle peasants akin to the rich peasants in terms of social and economic position as well as in political and agrarian outlooks. But the vast majority of them were gradually reduced to the status of landless agricultural labourers and petty land-holders, due to pressures of Colonial innovations. Finally, at the bottom of the ladder remained the classes of landless labourers, the most exploited, who constituted more than half of the rural population.

With this backdrop, an attempt will be made to analyze the various frameworks of study provided by scholars concerning peasant uprisings in India. To begin with, Barrington Moore has provided his model concerning the three "ideal type routes" to radical change and modernization: namely, the Bourgeoisie-Democratic Revolution, the Fascist Revolution and the Communist Revolution. According to Moore, while the peasantry all over

53. For details see Bipan Chandra, n.50, pp.330-332.
54. For details see S. J. Patel, n.51, p.148.
55. For details see Bipan Chandra, n.50, p.335.
the world have moved along each of these routes, the peasantry in India have not done so. This, according to Moore, could be attributed to "the traditionally-docile and passive character of Indian peasantry" as well as the "structural peculiarities of the village social organization, caste-sanctions and religious ethical precepts that had dominated the peasant life in India." Such a drastic conclusion, however, is not accepted by Dhanagare, who maintains that Moore's analysis is not deduced from any systematic theory but is only a reinterpretation of certain stereotypes of the Indian peasantry and the rural society.

Daniel Thorner in his study on the Agrarian Prospect in India has attempted to reduce the Indian peasantry into three well-defined and precise social categories namely, Maliks, Kisans and Majdoors. While the Maliks consist of the big land-lords and rich land-owners, Kisans consist of small land owners and substantial tenants. The class of Majdoors, however, include the poor tenants, share-croppers and the landless labourers. Thorner's categories, in fact, are based on the relations of production and especially concerning the means of production such as, the types of income obtained from the soil, the nature of rights and the extent of field work actually performed.

Commenting on Thorner's model, Dhanagare characterizes these

56. For details see Moore, n.24, pp.314-315.
57. For details see Ibid, pp.455-459.
58. Dhanagare, n.11, p.5.
59. Daniel Thorner, The Agrarian Prospect in India (Delhi, 1956), p.46.
60. Ibid, p.4.
categories as representing a "Marxian" approach relating to the agricultural classes. According to Dhanagare, such an approach suffers from the fact that "it does not relate to the specificity of the internal differentiation within the Indian agrarian society." 

Basing on Thorner's model A.N.Das expounded his five-fold classification of peasantry namely, the land-lords, rich peasants, middle peasants, poor peasants and the agricultural labourers. According to Das, out of these classes, the land-lords - capitalist, rich peasants, poor peasants and agricultural labourers are, however, all intimately connected with the capitalist process and system. But the middle peasantry, according to Das, is "backward looking, traditional, conservative and reactionary" in the sense and that in many cases, this economic class is not a "pure" category, as it comprises "the semi-feudal landlord capitalist, which prevents it from carrying out the anti-feudal struggle to its logical conclusion". Also, basing on Thorner's model, Dhanagare has outlined his five-fold classification of peasantry namely, the land-lords, rich peasants, middle peasants, poor peasants and landless labourers. This model is more or less the same as that of Arvind Das.

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61. For details see Dhanagare, n.11, pp.14-16.
63. For details see Ibid, p.15.
64. For details see Dhanagare, n.11, p.15.
The tribal, peasant and lower class mass movements in India have been analyzed by a group of scholars led by Ranajit Guha described as the Subaltern Studies. According to Guha, such a study relates to history and politics, economics and subalternity (inferior lower class) as well as to analyze their attitude, ideologies and belief systems. According to Sumit Sarkar, the concept is not free from ambiguities as it does not make a distinction between the two-fold division of a particular society namely, the elites and the subaltern. Also, the concept is used loosely with its rough equivalents like popular, mass and lower class movements. According to Sarkar, however, the subaltern classes include the tribal and low-caste agricultural labourers and share-croppers, the land-holdings peasants as well as the labourers in plantation, mines and industries.

Analyzing the works on popular and peasant movements in India, Ranajit Guha made a scathing attack on the "academic elitism" represented by Oxford and Cambridge traditions as well as the whole gamut of Colonial Writings for "their lack of appreciation" as well as their approach to the peasantry problem.

While rejecting such "academic elitism" as they have given entire credit for revolutionary movements in India to its elite personalities, their activities and ideas, Guha puts forward the view that the "subalterns" had been quite significant in this context. Also, he entertains a great dislike for such nationalist writings as well as the Colonial historiography which have exhibited a great disdain concerning the political consciousness of the peasant masses.

Analyzing the nature of agrarian movements, Ranajit Guha maintains that when a peasant had risen in revolt at any time or place under the British Raj, he had done so in violation of a series of codes which had defined his existence as a member of the Colonial as well as semi-feudal society. His subalternity, for instance, had been materialized by structure of property, institutionalized by law and sanctified by religion as well as traditions. By resorting to rebellion, according to Guha, he had, in fact, been "destroying for himself many of the aspects with which he had been familiar in the socio-economic fronts". Guha further disputes the contention of western scholars that peasant insurrections were purely spontaneous and unpremeditated in nature. He goes on arguing that it would be difficult to cite an uprising of any significant scale that had not been preceded

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69. Ibid., pp. 33-34.
70. Ibid., p. 1.
by some militant type of mass mobilization. He cites the revolts
by Kols and Santhals in support of his view and maintains that
these had been initiated after due planning and protracted
consultations between the representatives of the local peasant
masses.71

Some subaltern scholars have expressed their views with
regard to the nature and role of mass mobilization in India during
the nationalist phase. In this context Gyanendra Pandey has
pointed out that the Colonial historians have tended to treat the
Indian masses as essentially "inert" and that "outside agitators"
have resorted to "deliberate instigations" among such "ignorant"
and "unconcerned" people.72 David Hardiman in his study, however,
disputes the contention by stating that such an analysis is highly
superfluous in view of the fact that within a particular mass
movement; hundreds and thousands participate in rallies behind
certain "faction leaders". These leaders, however, make their
quest for prestige, and posts of office.73

With regard to the politics of mass protest, Gyanendra
Pandey points out that as the peasant insurrections had erupted
and swelled along with the tide of anti-imperialist struggle, the

72. Gyanendra Pandey, "Peasant Revolt and Indian Nationalism in
73. For details see David Hardiman, "The Indian Faction :
   A Political Theory Examined" in Ranajit Guha, Subaltern
Colonialists had dubbed these as a sign of manipulation by "outside agitators". Liberal-nationalist and Marxist historians on the other hand, had commented that "these movements were largely autonomous in character and that intervention by "outside leaders" had been quite marginal and often had been rather a late phenomenon". Further, according to Pandey, the dominant opinion in the academic circles in India has been to regard the Congress movement as a "political" movement, and the "workers" and "peasant" struggles as "social" movements. Sumit Sarkar in his study on the Swadeshi Movement in Bengal has also made similar contentions on social and political movements.

Some scholars, on the other hand, have held differing views with regard to the contentions of Ranajit Guha and his subaltern group. Bipan Chandra, for instance, has acknowledged the political content of the peasant struggles during the nationalist phase. He puts forward the view that the general struggles involving the peasantry, workers, and other labouring classes have often been "some-what out of step with the anti-imperialist struggle in India." Also, M.H.Siddiqui in his work on Agrarian Unrest in North India holds the view that "peasant struggles had been ill-timed and diversionary in nationalist context". Another prominent scholar on tribal movements

74. For details see Pandey, n.72, p.151.
76. Bipan Chandra, n.50, p.127.
namely, J.C. Jha also expresses serious reservations with regard to the reliability of "subaltern" studies. According to him, "many of the subaltern historians have not seen, let alone interviewed any tribals and still they claim to have certain empathy with the down-trodden". 78

In his study on peasant movements, A.R. Desai provides a perspective on the dialectical developments of the agrarian struggles in India during the British period. Desai states that there is already a widely-held belief among a large number of Indian scholars that unlike its counterparts in other countries, the Indian peasantry has become, "passive, fatalistic, docile, un-resisting, and bogged down in the quagmire of superstitions and other worldly fantasies". In view of such criticisms, according to Desai, it will be necessary to evolve a correct framework to study the tribal, peasant as well as mass movements in India. 79

A final framework concerning peasant uprisings and movements in India has been provided by Kathleen Gough in her study on "Indian Peasant Uprisings". Gough in her work has examined the origin and growth of socio-political movements in India and pointed out that these movements had involved the peasantry in the country as the sole or main force. She also has

78. See J.C. Jha, Key Note Address on National Seminar on Tribal Resistance Movement, Sambalpur University, Jyoti Vihar, 2-3 March 1985, p.10.

79. See A.R. Desai, ed. Peasant Struggles in India (New Delhi, 1980), pp.XII-XIII.
classified the peasant struggles during the British period into five types of actions in terms of goals, ideology and method of organization. These are namely, "Restorative Rebellion" (to drive out British and restore earlier rules and social relations), "Religious Movements" (for the liberation of a region or an ethnic group under a new form of government), "Social Banditry", "Terrorist Vengeance" (with ideas of meeting out collective justice) and "Mass Insurrections" (for redressal of particular grievances). Based on these characteristics of peasant uprisings, Gough has categorized the Indian agrarian movements into two major types namely, "Political Movements", (for independence or for regional or national autonomy among the tribal people) and "Social Movements" (peasant struggles which had been primarily influenced by class struggle and had been guided by the Communist Party of India.

In the subsequent chapter the peasant uprisings during the period of Pre-Nationalist Era (1757-1857), will be studied on the basis of five models as provided by Kathleen Gough in her study as mentioned above.

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80. For details see Kathleen Gough, n.1, pp.1401-1412.
81. For details see Ibid, p.1412.