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DIMENSIONS OF SOCIAL MOVEMENT: CONTEXTUALISING PEASANT MOVEMENT

Indian economy, even in the 21st century; has been largely dominated by the primary sector. Two-thirds of its population depends on agriculture. In local parlance they are known as *Kisans*, peasants in English. The term is used differently by different authors. Economically they are identified as small producers, who produce for their own consumption (Redfield 1956: 10), subsistence cultivators (Firth 1946: 17), who produce largely for the need of their family rather than for market and profit (Chayanov 1966: 26). Peasants are culturally unsystematic, unreflective, unsophisticated, non-literate and part of “little tradition” (Redfield, 1957: 15), the ‘incomplete’ and a ‘part society with part cultures’ (Kroeber 1948: 228). Shanin explains peasants on these dimensions- peasant family as the basic need of multi-dimensional social organization, land and animal husbandry as source of income, distinct culture as way of life, politically “under dog” or in a ruled position (Shanin 1984: 19). For Wolf, they are “unorganized and devoid of the knowledge required for organized collective action” (Wolf 1984: 91).

Karl Marx considered both European (Althusser 1971: 229-31) and Indian peasantry (Marx 1853) to be passive and apathetic to injustice, and quiescent to oppression and exploitation. He asserted that peasantry were devoid of revolutionary power and dubbed them as ‘sack of potatoes’ (Althusser 1971: 231). But, Mao (1943: 21), Lenin (1970: 502) and Fanon (1974: 47) placed peasants at the centre of revolution and accorded them revolutionary status. Irfan Habib (1963: 333-38) argued that the history of Indian jacqueries proved Marx’s contemptuous characterization of the Indian peasants as historically false (Habib, I, 1963: 333-38).

Barrington Moore Jr. (1961: 64) argues that Indian peasantry lack revolutionary potential due to their division along caste and communal lines, rural power alignment and class alliances. This thesis has been challenged by a number of authors- K. Gough (1974), D.N. Dhanagare (1983), R. Guha (1983), A.R. Desai (1969) and others. These authors assert that the Indian rural society was rocked by peasant protests and revolts not only during colonial rule, but even independent India is witnessing peasants’ revolts and rebellions. Some

Marxist authors have discussed 'revolutionary potential of Indian peasantry'. Eric Wolf and Hamza Alavi (1973) have asserted the revolutionary potential of 'middle peasantry'. But, Poucheпадass (1980) has identified 'dominant peasantry' as the progenitor of peasant movement in India. It is important to note that, these authors have analyzed the class character of Indian peasantry in its historical setting together with its ideology, goal, strategy and contradiction within it. The focus of this paper will be centred around sociological dimension of social movements, because two contending theoretical schools- Marxist and Functionalists; have generated divergent concepts, tools and methods to understand peasant movements. We will return to this theoretical discussion later.

Peasant movement is a distinct category of social movements. Conceptually, peasant movements are social movements in so far as they call for reform or seek change in the relationship pattern between peasant (who subsists on agricultural operation through labour) and landlords or governments (who are owners) in both social and political terms. Radical peasant movements are collective actions by group(s) of individuals, which try to bring about radical social changes in many aspects of society through conflict and opposition, rebellion and revolt, based on ideology and have their own mobilization process, leadership and strategy.

Social movements: Conceptual dimensions

Conventionally, study of social movements has been the domain of history and political science. The famous French Revolution and its aftermath have inspired social and political philosophers from Comte, Durkheim and Weber to Marx, from Von Stein, Sombart to Michels and Mosca. They paid due attention to explain modern European social structures and processes of change (Skocpol 1984: 2). But not much attention was paid to the meaning of ideas of the people who made up the movement, or to the social structure of these groups (Heberle 1951: 12). Thus, sociological perspective of the movements were absent by and large till 1930 (Davis 1930: 26). Today, study of social movements has distinct sociological flavour, precisely because of its different theoretical frame of interpretation and explanation, objective and subject matter.

Conceptual issues

Before full length sociological analysis, it is quite relevant to reflect upon the conceptual problems in the study of social movements which are as follows:

1. Definition and typology,
2. Differences from other related phenomena, such as trend, public opinion, voluntary association, mobs, riots, political parties, etc., and

3. Organization and leadership, internal-dynamics, routinization, and social consequences.

The discussion will revolve around the above aspects.

Definition

Social movement has been defined in various ways following one or the other criteria. Generally, four aspects of social movements have been stressed:

1. Ideology or normative aspect which binds its members together,
2. Collective mobilization and means employed,
3. Organizational structure, i.e., recruitment, commitment and leadership, and
4. Orientation to change, i.e., movement as an instrument of social change.

The first three aspects distinguish social movements from other related phenomena.

Heberle (1951: 13) emphasizes the integrative aspect of the ideological structure of the movement, which he defines as 'constitutive values'. Stressing the same aspect, Gusfield (1970: 2) says that "Social movements are socially shared activities and belief of the social order" (Gusfield, J. R., (ed.), 1970: 2). John Wilson focuses upon the second aspect, i.e., means employed as an instrument of change (Wilson 1973: 8). Gerlach and Hine (1970: xiv) stress the organizational character and recruitment aspects of the movement. Wendell King (1956: 27), Herbert Blumer (1951: I), Turner and Killian (1957: 308) lay emphasis on the fourth aspect, i.e., movement as an instrument of social change.

There is considerable agreement among sociologists of social movements on two basic features- collective mobilization and change orientation; but they differ on other aspects, such as ideology, organization and nature of consequences.

Distinctions: Three-major characteristics of social movement- ideology, means employed and organizational structure; distinguish it from other related phenomena. Let us focus upon some of the major differences.

Movement and trends: Wilson visualizes social movement as "a conscious, collective, organized attempt to bring about or resist large-scale change in the social order by non-institutionalized means" (Wilson 1973: 8.) It is in this sense social movement is different from other related phenomena. Gusfield (1970: 8) argues that; while social movements possess both 'structure' and 'sentiment', trends do not have these characteristics. For Heberle (1951:

8-7) group identity, feeling of solidarity and group consciousness among members of social movement, set apart the social movements from unconscious trends and tendencies. Whereas movements are integrated through its 'constitutive values' (*ibid*: 13), trends are un-coordinated actions of many individuals *ibid*: 439-44).

Some of the important differences between social movements and other forms of collective behaviour, such as crowd (we may also include other related phenomena) are:

1. Social movement has group identity, whereas crowd does not possess this feature.
2. Crowd is neither organized nor have structure, whereas social movements are organized collectivities (Wilson op. cit: 8).
3. Crowd exists relatively for a short period of time and is a cephalous kind.
4. Social movement unlike crowd behaviour rejects certain established beliefs and practices and brings about change in the existing authority and belief (Gusfield op. cit: 6).
5. Social movements are conscious, provisioned attempts to bring about change (Wilson op. cit: 11).

Thus, the distinctive features of a social movement are ideology, organization, leadership, social conflict, control and change, which are absent in other forms of collective behaviour.

Movement and political party

According to Wilson (*ibid*: 9-10) whereas social movements operate through non-institutionalized means, political parties function through institutionalized means. M. S. A. Rao (1978: 3) says that, "When a movement with a defined ideology becomes a well established political party, it ceases to be a movement". But situation becomes complicated when he says that due to internal dynamics in a party may lead to splinter movements. Gusfield believes that movements may be organized, yet many movements are not organizations and goes on to say that a certain degree of organization is necessary for movements. For Heberle (1951: 10) "apparently no clear-cut distinction between a movement and a party can be made by this method of searching for a single distinguishing trait". Thus the situation is far from clear.

For analytical purpose a movement can be distinguished as a 'process' and a political party as a 'structure' (Wilson op. cit: 57-58). Whereas movement is a process directed towards change in organization or structure, political party is a structure to achieve monopoly of coercive power and control over governance and administration. The above distinction is for conceptual clarity; empirically both are two faces of the same coin.

Further, social movements have been classified by Using one or another criteria- locus, objectives, or the quality of change, scale and spatial spread, dominant issues of interests, ideology and participants (Rao op. cit: 3). The literature of social movements is full of typologies. It ranges from purely descriptive, such as reactionary, utopian and escapist, to those which have been deduced from a body of theory. However, there is no single criterion for the classification of social movements and typologies are not mutually exclusive. Rao goes one step ahead when he says that any classification of movement; is bound to remain inadequate, because movement acquires new features in the course of its development and so, any classification can only be a relative to a particular phase in its development (*Ibid*: 4). Thus, one should be extremely conscious about the complexities of the situation and the limitations of typologies, while dealing with this aspect of social movements.

Collective movement organization and leadership

We have stated earlier that a minimum level of organization is essential for any social movement. According to Rao (*ibid* : 9) . “Social movement tends to develop a loose federal structure with central and regional associations being held together by relationships of local autonomy and external links based on common interest”.

Gerlach and Hine also highlight the organizational structure of social movement and a similar view is expressed by Wilson (op. cit: 7), and Shah 1977: 17). But controversy arises on the question whether social movement begins with an organization or it develops in the course of the movement. If it starts with an organizational structure, then protests and agitations may be excluded from the domain of movement because they may not have an organization to begin with (*ibid*: 19). The problem with the above definitions is that they have (heuristic value.’ However, the essentiality of an organization is highlighted not only by sociologists but its necessity is being felt by the protagonists of the movement themselves (Lenin 1970: 299-446). Collective mobilization; which is a crucial part of a movement, is connected with ideology, leadership and organization. Process of collective mobilization is stratified and based on division of labour. While skilled members formulate the ideology and spread the message, relatively less skilled are recruited as volunteers. Leadership, in the process of collective mobilization, exploits caste, kin, traditional institutional framework, and linguistic ties for the recruitment purpose. Popular idioms and symbols are also used together with creating new units of organization (Rao, M. S. A., op. cit: 8-9). According to Wilson, “Organizations are important because they perform the vital function of *Adaptation, Integration, and Goal Attainment* (Wilson, J., op. cit: 266).

Social movements logically belong to the province of ‘social change’ (Turner and Killian, op. cit, Rao, M. S. A., op. cit.). Nature of social changes brought about by social movements is *sine qua non* for any meaningful

understanding of these movements. According to P. N. Mukherji, the relationship between social movement and social change (or resistance to change) is incontrovertible (Mukherji, P. N., in M. S. A., Rao, op. cit: 38). Thus, it is important to understand the conceptual problem related to social change. Social change can be classified, broadly, into two categories:

1. Changes in the position of the concerned section of a movement, and
2. Their impact on the wider society, this further can be sub-divided into two groups:
 - (a) Partial or total changes in the structure, and
 - (b) Marginal changes to maintain the *status quo*.

This division is similar to Smelser's distinction between 'Value' and 'Norm' oriented movements (Smelser, N. J., 1962: 10-13). Generally, marginal changes type of movements is launched by the establishment in reaction to change-oriented movements, In order to maintain their position. In contrast, structural change movements originate among the deprived sections of society and directed towards change in values, norms and structure of positional arrangements. M. S. A. Rao visualizes three levels of structural changes- Reform, Transformative, and Revolution (Rao, M. S. A., op. cit: 12). P. N. Mukherji proposes three types of social changes related to social systems- Accumulative, Alternative, and Transformative (Mukherji, P. N., op. cit: 43). Ghanshyam Shah classifies movements as- Revolt, Rebellion, Reform, and Revolution; to bring about changes in the political system (Shah, G., op. cit: 63-64). These typologies are exhaustive and mutually not exclusive.

Structural change movements can be classified into two broader categories: movements aimed at- (a) Change *within* the social system, and (b) Change *of* the social system (emphasis added). The revolutionary movements are directed towards radical changes in the totality of social and cultural systems. These changes are sudden and guided by ideology, class conflict and political party. It is an organized struggle, launched by a section of the society in order to overthrow not only the established system, but also to replace it by an alternative social order. We will return to empirical dimension of Revolutionary Movement later. Now, it is imperative to dwell upon the dominant theoretical frameworks for the study of social movements.

Theoretical Dimensions of Social Movements

Broadly speaking, there are three dimensions in the study of social movements:

1. The Sequential study, also termed as historical study,
2. The Psychological study, and
3. The Sociological study.

There is no water-tight compartmentalization, neither the above categories are mutually exclusive or exhaustive. There is a considerable degree of overlapping, because modern social scientific approach is largely interdisciplinary. Purpose of the above categorization is to highlight sociological matrices of social movements, because two contending theoretical schools—the Marxist and the Functionalist; have generated divergent concepts, tools and methods to understand peasant movements. But very briefly; we will discuss other two dimensions as well.

Historical Study of Social Movements

Treatises of social movements are full of sequential studies. Focus of these studies is on the sequential presentation of data, events and details of the movements. Much attention is not paid to the cause and effect, structure and organization of social movements. In short, interpretative aspects of the movements are ignored, by and large. However, historical study of social movement is an important aid in the study of sociological perspective. Sequential studies take into account the genesis, favourable situation, ideology, opposition and alliance of the movement (Pridham, G., 1973). These studies focus more either on political history or individual history of the movement (Kirkpatrick, S. I., 1964). Historical and sociological study of social movements differs in terms of *emphasis*. Sequential study's emphasis is on structural conditions leading to a movement. Sociologists stress more on short-term historical changes in the socio-economic structures that lead to social movement. Secondly, they also lay stress on organizational structure, leadership, ideology and motivational factors which lead to social movement. However, there is nothing inherently sociological or historical in the study of social movement. The study of movement takes into account both historical and sociological perspectives (Mukherjee, R. K., in Gough and Sharma, (ed.), op. cit: 399-418).

Psychological Study of Social Movements

Studies of this kind throw light upon the psycho-analytical factors and personality types as causes of the social movements. According to this perspective, an individual joins social movement due to frustration, repression and failure to achieve desired goals (Heberle, R., op. cit: 102-3, also McCormack, T., in McLaughlin, B., (ed.), 1969: 77). Psychological study ignores not only impulses to change, but the sociological dimensions as well, e.g., social mobilization and social bases. Wilson argues, psycho-analytical study of social movement “obscures, and on occasion totally conceals impulses to change which emanate from within society itself” (Wilson, J., op. cit: 54). Individual(s) may be pathological, but not the group(s). Methodologically it is wrong to “apply categories of this kind to social entities like groups and movements as if they were individuals” (Heberle, R., op. cit: 109). Psychological study emphasizes

on “who are the Revolutionaries?”, rather than “what causes revolutions in a social system?” (Johnson, C, 1964: 23). To this end, we may say that study of this type ignores the social bases of the social movement.

Sociological Studies of Social Movement

Sociological treatise of social movements is enriched by two discordant theoretical perspectives- Functionalist and Marxian; which provide divergent tools, concepts, hypotheses, methods, arguments and presentations for the study of social movements.

Functionalist Framework

Functionalism is not a single stream of thought. It represents a variety of approaches and philosophical orientations, such as organic and mechanical functionalism, structural functionalists and conflict theorists. But they share common concern and perspective. One of the most important theoretical concerns of this school is to maintain order and function of the social system. Marxists and Functionalists differ radically on the question of ‘social change.’ For Functionalists, change is a deviation from dominant pattern due to dysfunctions, tensions and deviance (Pierre, L. V. Den Berghe, in Demerath, N. J., (ed.), 1967: 295). More deviation from consensus value more possibility of social change. But equilibrium is achieved through built-in mechanism within the system, which revolves around- “socialization” and “mechanism of social control” (Parsons, T., 1951: 481-2). Although, Functionalists believe that changes in the social system may give rise to social movement. But the movement continues only till consensus is reached, *albeit* at a higher level, which Parsons terms as ‘re-equilibrium process’ (Ibid: 520-35).

Static functionalist model of Parsons *et. al.* is criticized by conflict theorists and dynamic functionalists, (Dahrendorf, R., 1969, also Coser, L. A., 1956), apart from Marxian school. This model is criticized on two points- “change” and “conflict.” According to Gouldner protagonists of static model have not realized that, “the truly dynamic elements of conflict and collective behaviour occur due to the interaction between mobilization and control process” (Gouldner, A. W., 1971: 23). The author goes on to argue that Parsons does not comprehend mobilization and control as the two faces of the same coin (Ibid: 21). Dahrendorf and Coser are critical on the notion of stable social equilibrium. Dahrendorf argues that as conflict generates change, so constraint generates conflict. He assumes that conflict is ubiquitous, since constraint is ubiquitous, whenever human beings set up social organizations which are ‘imperatively coordinated associations’ rather than social systems (Dahrendorf, R., op. cit: 167, 206-18). Coser also put forward a number of propositions concerning the intensity and impact of conflict (Coser, L. A., op. cit: 151-56). The essential similarity between Parsonian Functionalism and conflict school is on the question of ‘basic causes’ of conflict. Gouldner observes that none of

these functionalists try to find out the basic causes of conflict, but see “how the initial causes of strains are mediated and filtered through intervening social structures (Gouldner, A. W., op. cit: 23). Dahrendorf and Coser view conflict as a healthy and beneficial sign for social system in certain cases. Further, even conflict school argues that conflict revolution, or movement cannot change the social system (Gusfield, J. R., op. cit: 8). They do not accept the view that, system contains inherent contradiction which can be removed through revolution or structural transformation. Thus, Functionalist School lays great emphasis on change *within* the social system, and completely ignores the possibility of change *of* the system, as viewed by the Marxists (emphasis added).

Marxist Framework

Marxist school is by no means an undifferentiated stream of thought. A glance at the various studies on the subject reveals not only an enormous range of viewpoints, but also different interpretations of Marx. After the death of Marx and Engels, Marxism has developed different competing theories, which in turn were enriched by series of interpretations, traditions and perspectives. Broadly speaking; there are *Vulgar Marxism*, *Critical or Western Marxism*, *Structural Marxists* and more recently *Subaltern Studies Group*. There is lively and intense debate among Marxist scholars on theoretical and methodological issues. The main province of this paper is not to go into the depth of the debate, but to pick up the common concern of Marxist scholars which provides critical and crucial break between Marxist and non-Marxist sociology.

In contrast to Functionalist perspective, Marxists view classes as differentiated categories having contradictory interests. For Marxists changes occur due to contradiction in the economic base of the system, i.e. between forces and relations of production. Different classes have divergent interests and values within the social system, which lead to the development of antagonistic class relationships. This can be resolved through structural change. This change will take place when working class (proletariat) will be transformed from *class-in-itself to class-for-itself*.

Conflict school accepts the ‘conflict’ element in the social system. Dahrendorf says that conflict is ubiquitous, because constraint is ubiquitous (Dahrendorf, R., op. cit: 167). Coser also supports this view point. But even conflict school does not probe deeper into the “basic causes” of change and social movements. As for Marxists, the principal reason for the rise of social movements is located in the contradiction of the economic infrastructure of the social system. But vital issue in the Marxist analysis is to understand the class character of the movement. The class character, at one level, is apparent in terms of socio-economic background of its adherents. But at another level, the class character can be analyzed on the basis of its approach towards the

dominant contradiction, i.e., contradiction in the economic infrastructure of the society (Gupta, D., 1982: 23). This principal contradiction cannot lead to social movement. To induce a revolutionary situation, determinant contradiction must act in conjunction with the forms of the superstructure, e.g., state, dominant ideology, religion, tradition, political culture, etc., dominant at that time. The dominant contradiction must be active in all these contradictions and even in their fusion (Althusser, L., op. cit: 99-100). Therefore, in order to understand nature and consequences of peasant movement in general and radical agrarian movement in particular, it is important to analyze the approach of the movement towards basic contradiction, issues and its class interests, its ally and antagonistic classes, and nature of change the movement is aiming for.

Further, due to its over emphasis on 'equilibrium' Functionalists do not view social change as progress through various historical phases. Marxists argue that society develops through resolving contradictions in different historical epoch; "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles" (Marx, K., and Engels, F., 1888: 40). For Marx, "Revolution is the driving force of history" (Marx, K., 1977: 50). According to him, the Asiatic, ancient, feudal and modern bourgeois modes of production are epoch making progress in the economic development of society (*Ibid*: 21). The Marxists regard each form of historical development to be in fluid movement, and so they take into consideration its transient nature. Thus, Marxist framework provides an opportunity to understand the outcome of the radical peasant movement by virtue of its historical setting, and its class character.

In short, we can say that Marxist perspective provides greater penetrating tools and in depth analytical power to understand peasant movements in general, and radical agrarian movements in particular. This theoretical framework locates not only basic causes of the radical agrarian movements, but also analyses the movement in its historical setting. With the help of dialectical concept one can indicate the direction of the movement. This perspective also provides analytical tools to understand organizational mechanism of the movement. Further, vital linkage of ideology with class interests takes us closer to analyze the aim, nature, consequences and limitations of the radical agrarian movement. Now let us apply this theoretical perspective in the contemporary agrarian structure of Bihar.

The Agrarian Structure of Bihar

Chronic malnutrition and death due to starvation had become common phenomena in Bihar during 1966-67 as a result of drought and famine. Root of the problem was in the prevailing system of land tenure- the way land was held and managed, and its produce disposed off. But it conveys small friction of grim reality of rural poverty. Life of the peasants moved around a vicious circle of borrowings at exorbitant rates from moneylenders for bare basic needs.

Rate of interest ranged between one-half to two-thirds of their crop produce. In some places it was as high as 70-80 per cent (Banerjee, S., 1980: 5). Poor peasants first mortgaged their small plots and later sold them to moneylenders or landlords; reducing themselves to the position of landless labourers. Condition of landless labourers was even worst. Under-employment and low wages in agriculture, together with lack of employment opportunities outside the primary sector, often forced them to borrow at exorbitant rate for bare minimum. Inability to payoff debt and ever accumulating interests, often led to a form of bonded slavery; which perpetuated from generation to generation.

Other forms of exploitation also co-existed. 'Beggars' or forced labour and imposition of levies on tenants during ceremonies in employer's house on special occasions were two most egregious ones. On the social front peasant suffered from social exploitations and discrimination, e.g. not allowed to draw water from village wells reserved for upper castes, not permitted to enter the compound of *pucca* house of their employers, sexual assault of their womenfolk's, etc. Very often they were condemned to live in dingy hamlets of the outskirts of village.

The picture that emerges from above account of exploitations is one of the nightmarish poverty, humiliation and oppression; inflicted upon more than half of the rural population by a minority of rich moneylenders and landlords. Bihar has glorious history of oppression and struggle. For past several decades; the state has been in the state of agrarian turmoil. In response to widespread agrarian unrest, government of Bihar has taken certain economic measures to bring about some changes in agrarian structure. These measures can be grouped under two broader rubrics:

1. Measures flowing out of Land Reforms, and
2. Those emanating on account of the Green Revolution.

Let us analyse above measures to assess its impact on traditional rural structure.

Land Reforms and Its Impact on Agrarian Structure

It was Daniel Thorner who recognised very early the ambiguous character of land reform in India, and came to the conclusion that techniques of land reform would never change the prevailing balance of power in rural areas (Thorner, D., 1956). Later it became quite clear from the fact that instead of improving condition of tenants, the measure led to mass eviction of them.

Broadly; land reform measures can be divided into three phases. The first phase started just after Independence when Zamindari system was abolished to eliminate non-cultivating intermediate tenants. The second phase initiated during 1950s; aiming to bring about tenancy reforms on two fronts—first it sought to give security of tenure to tenants, and second tried to regulate

rents paid by them. The third phase, after end of 1950s, initiated to enforce ceiling on the size of individual holdings and to distribute excess land thus recovered among landless and small peasants. But all these measures failed miserably partly due to strong influential position of landlords in the Congress, and partly due to numerous loopholes and delay in implementation. On the contrary; large-scale eviction of tenants was started to prevent them from asserting their new rights. No legal restriction on the size of holdings existed prior to passing of land ceilings act almost a decade after abolition in 1960s (*Ibid.*).

Government of Bihar was first in the country to introduce some significant land reform measures, e.g. Privileged Persons Homestead Tenancy Act of 1947, fixation of minimum wages in 1948, Zamindari Abolition Act in 1950. But these acts had hardly any impact on the labouring poor. The measures remained largely unimplemented on account of concentration of power in the hands of tiny group of influential caste land owners. Land remained in the hands of powerful upper caste and backward caste cultivators. Some old zamindars managed to retain their hold over land by circumventing the laws and using caste connections in the local bureaucracy (*Ibid.*: 16). Different reports on Land Reforms in Bihar have made it ample clear that these measures have not ameliorated pathetic conditions of the agrarian poor. It is largely due to half-hearted efforts by the state government and utterly biased attitude of the bureaucracy (*Mainstream*, 2 June 1973: 13-15). The state machinery has been repeatedly censured both for its favours to land-owning class as well as for repression and neglect of poor. The then Central Home Ministry remarked: "By their abysmal failure to implement the laws, authorities in Bihar have reduced the whole package of land reforms measures to a sour joke.... In Bihar, the landowners do not care a pittance for the administration. They take it for granted. Their approach is defiant, their modus operandi open and insolent" (*Mainstream*, 11 May 1973: 40). Daniel Thorner, on visit to Bihar in 1956 remarked, "Eight years after Bihar legislature voted its acceptance of the principle of Zamindari abolition, majority of zamindars of the state were in legal possession of their lands" (Thorner, D., op. cit: 16). Situation has not improved as yet. State Revenue and Land Reform Department conducted state-wise survey in 1975 to find out extent of big landholdings. The report is revealing; about 400 big landlords possess over 16, 10,000 acre of land under various fictitious names, titles and trusts (Louis, P., 2002: 104-60).

Furthermore; irregularities in land transfer by Congress leaders, government officials and businessmen; to land hungry peasants accentuated anger of poor masses. This led to famous 'Sathi Farm struggle' in Champaran, which was the only organised peasant struggle during 1950s and 1960s in Bihar. This movement was relegated to the background, but it became a source of inspiration for peasant mobilisation later.

Due to utter failure of institutional efforts of land reforms from the top; significant efforts have been initiated from the bottom by the leaders of the Gandhian fold; with Vinoba Bhave at the upfront. Initially Bhoodan has been recognised by the stalwarts of peace movement as the significant non-violent revolution to solve most complicated land issue. Although Bhoodan-Gramdan movement generated social awareness on agrarian issues, but in terms of its announced aim it was an abortive experiment (Oommen, T. K., 1972). Against the target of 50 million acres, the movement's achievement was modest. Only 4.3 million acres could be received in Bhoodan as *Dana*, which was 8.53 per cent of the total target (Iyengar, S., 2007: 407). Major criticism of the movement is that donors had cheated the movement by donating such lands that were either unfit for cultivation or was under serious dispute about titles. More than 44 per cent donated lands were not available for redistribution and cultivation. However; it is this betrayal of historically marginalised poor peasants and landless labourers, which prepared fertile ground for rise and sustenance of ultra left politics and ideology in rural Bihar.

With the emergence of Maoist groups in Bihar; land hungry poor peasants and landless labourers launched powerful struggles to seize illegal possession of gair mazarua land hitherto held by powerful maliks. Landless dalits seized 1000 acre of surplus land in Jalpura of Patna district in 1992, 616 acres of gair mazarua land has been seized from 28 June to 5 July 1993 in Panki block of Palamau, MCC has seized 4500 acres in Gaya district, 1000 acres of land has been seized by MCC and IPF in Nawada; are few such cases. Monthly publications of Maoist Parties are full of such land seizure instances. District administration has confessed to a PUDR team, "Force is essential for any land distribution efforts" (PUDR, 1992: 16). It seems extra-constitutional measure has been dominant means to implement just and democratic demands. Landed elite has made valiant efforts to protect their dominant position in rural Bihar. Most of the caste Senas has been formed in mid. 1980s with a clarion battle cry, "Kisan's lives and property are in danger and the government has failed in protecting them; so Kisan *must themselves* protect their lives and property" (CPI (ML), Document, 1986: 70, emphasis added).

Green Revolution and Its Impact

Principal assumption of green revolution was based on 'trickle down theory', which was supposed to increase well-beings of weaker section through increase in agricultural output. But the assumption proved to be utter failure at least in the case of Bihar. Impact of green revolution not only widened the gap between rich and poor, but also posed the question of distributive justice and raised the level of relative deprivation. Chester Bowels had observed as early as 1967, "the dramatic increase in food output which are occurring and which should continue to grow in the years ahead may lead to sharp disparities in income, which in turn may create an expanding sense of economic and

social injustice" (Bowels, c., 1969: 83). Soon the reality had been recognised by the government as well. The then Home Minister warned, " ... unless Green Revolution is accompanied by a revolution based on social justice, I am afraid the Green Revolution may not remain Green" (*Patriot*, 29 November 1969).

During his field visit in Bihar; Jannuzi observed that even in those areas where impact of green revolution has been felt, wage of labourers remained static since 1957, but income of affluent farmers has gone up (Jannuzi, F. T., 1974: 165). Rising living standards of minority affluent farmers gave rise to new expectations among rural poor. Further green revolution has been confined to certain areas and certain crops. This capital intensive strategy has been introduced in selected districts (with assured irrigation facilities), and confined to new dwarf varieties of wheat and paddy. The impact of green revolution could not be felt in the cultivation of bajra, maize, jowar, which constitute staple diet of rural masses in Bihar (*Ibid*: 163-65).

The new capital-intensive agricultural strategy of mid-sixties not only displaced large number of agricultural labourers and small tenants, but also forced the small farmers to sell their lands to rich ones. A new breed of farmers, e.g. doctors, lawyers, businessmen and civil servants emerged, who with their unaccounted money looked towards farming as a source of high supplementary income free from any tax burdens (Landejinsky, *The Statesman*, 11-12 September 1970). Thus general belief and enthusiasm of the seventies showed a different picture. Now the agricultural ladder has been replaced by a descending escalator on which small and medium sized farmers, be they tenants or owners, rapidly moved down to the level of landless agricultural workers. Continued sub-division and fragmentation of land holdings due to change in market process, institutional changes, and demographic pressures led to growing rate of landlessness and made millions of peasants increasingly aware of their state of isolation and frustration. Their experience of declining social and economic status vis-a-vis elites of agrarian sector resulted in acceleration of political and economic polarisation.

Many parties were formed to address the basic hardships of the agrarian poor. Peasant movement in Bihar had been organized around the internal contradiction in agrarian structure during late 1930s and early 1940s under the banner of Kisan Sabha. Since then many parties came in the frontal role to guard the interest of the poor peasants- Congress, Socialist, Communist, etc. Yet they all failed to redress their basic hardships. Growing discontent and tension of historically marginalised peasants has been effectively channelised by different Naxalite and Maoist groups in the state in late 1960s, which provided a new dimension to the peasant radicalism in the state.

Radical Agrarian Movement in Bihar

Since the onset of spring thunder 2 in 1967 and formation of CPI (M-L) on 22nd April 1969 (Lenin's birth anniversary) ever suffering peasants

rediscovered their traditional militancy. They derived their inspiration from the Indian jacqueries of the 18th and 19th centuries; as well as from the Telangana and Srikakulam armed revolt. The term 'Naxalite' (from Naxalbari of Darjeeling district of West Bengal) symbolised any assault upon the assumptions and institutions that support the established order in India. The term has become part of the vocabulary of world revolution (Banerjee, S., 1984: v). Naxalites emerged as the only hope of marginalised masses for their socio-economic emancipation. The ensuing 'emancipatory violence' promised to eliminate not only material but also socio-psychological oppressions of dalits and poor peasants.

In sharp contrast to earlier peasant movements; main participants of the Naxalite movement were poor peasants, landless agricultural labourers and small sharecroppers. They were fighting not against landlords and absentee landlords (as during anti-zamindari struggle) but emergent *Kulaks* comprising mainly Bhumihars, Rajputs, Yadavas and Kurmi. Contrary to earlier agrarian struggle, the armed struggle of Naxalites emphasised violent dissolution of all feudal authority leading to capture of political power, through armed guerrilla warfare linked to an agrarian programme. Radical agrarian movement in Bihar has mainly three phases- first phase between 1967 and 1971, second phase from 1972 to 1975, and third phase in the post-emergency period. Some scholars propound fourth phase, i.e. after the formation of CPI (Maoist) in late 2004.

The First Phase

In the first phase; the Naxalite movement was largely centred on North and some parts of South Bihar? Mushahari village of Muzaffarpur district emerged as an epicentre of peasant radicalism in 1968. The struggle of Mushahari peasantry had its origin in a movement on economic issue, launched by the Kisan Sangram Samiti. With direct intervention of the state; and its 'encirclement' and 'suppression' policy, rebels changed their tactics from open confrontations to 'guerrilla warfare' and 'annihilation campaign' (Singh, S., 1969). Mushari caught the headlines of dailies not only for the first full-scale Naxalite uprising in Bihar but also for the intervention of Jayaprakash Narayan (popularly known as JP). Being a prominent leader of Socialist fold he tried to solve the problems of marginalised masses through Gandhian means. His sheer presence attracted attention of national and international developmental organisations. Lots of developmental funds start pouring in the areas. This has raised the expectations of toiling masses that their socio-economic condition will improve. Very soon JP realised that he has failed in his mission. He left the area with utter disgust after spending a year and half. During this phase the movement also proliferated in many parts of North Bihar, e.g. Darbhanga, Saharsa, Purnea; and some parts of South Bihar-Ranchi, Dhanbad and Jamshedpur. By 1970, all the districts of Bihar, barring

central Bihar, had seen indignant landless labourers, poor peasants and impatient students taking up arms. But the phase came to an early end by 1971 due to variety of reasons, e.g. intra-party factionalism, lack of sound organisational structure and grassroots leadership, rapid expansion and retention of base areas and formation of people's militia, coercive action by the government and naïve understanding of military might of Indian state by the rebels.

The Second Phase

In this phase, the movement started taking place in central and south central regions of Bihar from 1973 onwards. Patna, Nalanda, Bhojpur and Rohtas of central Bihar; and Dhanbad, Hazaribagh, Giridih and Palamau of south Bihar (now a separate state-Jharkhand) emerged as epicentres of renewed peasant onslaught. The movement consisting of numerous peasant groups had many ups and downs but gradually it expanded. In terms of influence three major groups, namely CPI (M-L) *Party Unity* which has Mazdoor Kisan Mukti Morcha as its mass front, CPI (M-L) *Liberation* with Indian People's Front as its front organisation, and Maoist Communist Centre (MCC) with Jan Suraksha Sangharsh Manch, played significant role in spreading Naxalite movement in the regions. During this phase Bhojpur became 'Naxalbari' of the state, from where revolutionary peasant movement has proliferated in other parts of Bihar. Liberation group has strong presence in Bhojpur district; represented moderate and democratic elements in the ongoing peasant movement. MCC operated as the most extremist, secretive and violent wing, concentrated in Gaya, Jehanabad, Aurangabad and Patna in central Bihar. Party Unity has strong base in Jehanabad. The Party Unity merged with People's War Group in August 1998; renamed as CPI (M-L) People's War Group. This Party along with MCC advocates violence as the dominant means to establish People's democracy. With the formation of CPI (M-L) PWG; central Bihar region has witnessed unprecedented peasant radicalism and violent clashes between them, and landlords and moneylenders. Unlike the first phase; grassroots leaders and lower caste landless labourers sustained the movement from 1973 to 1975. During this phase parallel governments of the peasantry has been created in many parts of the region. Proclamation of National Emergency dealt a heavy blow to the ongoing peasant movement. Government launched a massive onslaught called 'Operation Thunder' in May 1976 (CPI (ML) Document, 1986: 24). Due to repressive onslaught by the government and fratricidal warfare within dominant Naxal and Maoist groups led to temporary loss of intensity and magnitude of the movement.

The Third Phase

In the post-Emergency period Maoist movement resurfaced with renewed vigour and vitality. They put emphasis on mass politics as a strategy

for mass mobilisation. The year 1977-80 was marked by the emergence of many local-level mass organisations of different Naxalite and Maoist parties. Soon radical peasant movement shook the plains of central Bihar, with Patna standing in the forefront. The upsurge mainly centred on taking control of village property like tanks, common land from landlords, seizure of *Nested* land held illegally by the influential rural elites, smashing feudal social oppression and the armed gangs of the landlords, resisting police atrocities, and demanding wage increase (*Ibid*: 62-3). Contrary to excessive violence of the first phase; some Naxalite groups started a new perspective on social violence. CPI (M-L) Liberation now abandoned earlier strategy of 'annihilation of class enemies' and instead focused on expanding mass organisations of peasants comprising dalits and lower castes. The party accepted primacy of agrarian and social struggles for land, wage and dignity of toiling masses. They also recognised the potency of democratic politics and decided to join electoral process. Under the banner of Indian People's Front the CPI (M-L) Liberation succeeded to win one seat of Member of Parliament from Arrah constituency in 1989. In Bihar assembly election of 1989, 1995, 2000 and 2005 the party secured 7, 6, 6, and 6 seats respectively (Hauser, Walter, 1993: 122). Entry of Liberation group in the domain of electoral politics has infused new sense of confidence among dalits and marginalised masses. It has also challenged 'booth capturing' practices of influential rural elites; a dominant way to win election in the state of Bihar. In late 1980s; combination of parliamentary politics with that of militant extra-parliamentary mobilisation of dalits and poor peasants by the Naxalite and Maoist groups has provided them a new sense of legitimacy and acceptability in the state politics and civil society of Bihar.

It is important to note that all dominant Maoist groups have not accepted the logic of parliamentary politics; as a strategy of revolutionary mobilisation of toiling masses. MCC and Party Unity still follow the line of 'insurrectionary revolution.' They rely on armed struggle and annihilation of class enemies. In spite of fratricidal conflict among dominant Naxal and Maoist groups for territorial supremacy; radical movement has acquired the character of mass movement and way of emancipation among lower castes agricultural labourers. It is during this phase; dominant agrarian issues like implementation of statutory minimum wages, redistribution of surplus and *gair mazarua khas* land, prestige (Izzat) of lower castes poor peasants and their quest to participate in electoral process; have emerged more prominently in the plains of central Bihar.

The Current Phase

On 14th October 2004 two most powerful Maoist groups- Maoist Communist Centre (MCC) and CPI (M-L) People's War Group (PWG) merged together and formed CPI (Maoist). With this initiative radical movement has

entered into new phase in Bihar and adjoining states. Leaders of the new outfit announced that the unity is to further revolution causes. They also announced to form People's Liberation Guerrilla Army and to support revolutionary struggles in Nepal, Peru, Philippines, Turkey and other countries the world over (Banerjee, S., 2006: 3160). The party has demonstrated its might with attacks in Madhuban block of East Champaran district of north Bihar on 23rd June 2005 and daring Jehanabad jailbreak on 13th November 2005 in central Bihar. The former attack indicated spectacular comeback of the radical movement in north Bihar after a gap of almost three and a half decades, the latter revealed growing military skills of the Maoists (Bhatia, B., 2005: 5369-71).

In the current phase the CPT (Maoist) has achieved stunning gains in Bihar and adjoining states. Maoist's followed Charu Mazumdar's popular strategy of 1970s of 'annihilation of class enemies', which is in sharp contrast to Liberation's path. The party denounced parliamentary path of competitive politics and follow extra-parliamentary struggle to establish people's democracy through liberation of rural areas by establishing guerrilla zones on the basis of agrarian revolution. It seems that the current phase of radical movement has entered into two distinct formations: the CPI (M-L) Liberation relies on mass and open democratic politics, the CPI (Maoist) follows the line of 'underground revolutionary struggle.'

In the light of foregoing analysis one can conclude that peasant movements in general and radical movement in particular fall in the domain of social movement, insofar as they exhort for reform or seek change in the relationship between peasant and owners. The radical agrarian movements are collective actions by group of individuals, which try to bring about radical social change through rebellion and revolt, based on ideology, mobilization process, leadership, organization and strategy. More detailed research will bring out some more facts on the topic but this paper tried to fulfil those concerns that have been mentioned earlier.

NOTES

1. Ram Prasad Shahi, the then Commissioner of Bihar got about 350 acres of Sathi Farms, B. B. Verma, a Congress leader settled large areas of land with his relatives, Prajapati Mishra another Congress leader got Bettiah Raj land settled in his own name are some of the examples (for detail see, Das, A. N., 1983: 223-24).
2. The term 'Spring Thunder' had been used by the Chinese Communist Party for the emergence of Naxalite Movement in West Bengal. On 28 June 1967; Peking Radio welcomed radical assertion of peasantry in Naxalbari under the guidance of Mao Tse-tung teachings.
3. Now a separate state called Jharkhand.

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