D. N. Dhanagare

UNDERSTANDING THE NEW FARMERS' MOVEMENT IN MAHARASHTRA: TOWARDS AN ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

After India embarked on its path of planned economic development in 1952, accepting the postulates of mixed capitalist economy under the cloak of Nehruvian socialism, there have been no major peasant revolts, rebellions or protest movements. Of course, the notable exceptions are the Naxalite movement and the 'Land-grab' movement in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh that began in the 1960s. The former movement still continues with all its numerous internal ideological differences and factional manifestations in different parts of India. Its complex, and yet known as, 'Maoist' ideological nuances, but with much larger agenda, are occupying regions after regions in India ranging from the foothills of the Himalayas (from the borders of Nepal) to Bihar, U.P. Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Odisha and Andhra Pradesh. Initially the Naxalites started only to secure permanent occupancy rights for the bargadars (sharecroppers) in the Naxalbari Subdivision of Jalpaiguri district of West Bengal. Today the movement has spread practically over major states of India, mobilising marginalised and oppressed people ranging from Adivasis (tribal), Dalits, bonded labourers, agricultural labourers and also women whose voices have remained unheard so far.Naxalite leadership gives call for 'fight to the finish' and openly advocate use of violence against 'perceived class enemy'. The Indian state and its law enforcement agencies, on the contrary, claim that the Naxalite movement is involved in acts of sedition, and subversion therebyit has questioned the legitimacy of the Indian state. The Naxalite leadership, however,argues that it has been struggling for restoration of the rights of the tribal people to land and forests to which state sponsored contractors are denying them access; the Naxal leadership further claims that they protect the interests of oppressed tribal people from corrupt officials, and also from atrocities of police force. Studies on the Naxalite movementby Shankar Ghosh (1974), Biplab Dasgupta (1974), Sumant Banerjee (1984), Ravindra Ray, Parth Nath Mukherjee (1978: 17-90), and few others are available for researchers. One of the earliest account of the Naxalite movement was made available to us by Mohan Ram (1974) who has given the Maoist ideological justification for the peasant uprising in 1967 that synchronised

D. N. DHANAGARE, National Fellow, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla.

with the Chinese strategy to commend the their strategy of 'People's War', especially for the Third World country like India. Mohan Ram (1974: 137-88) is critical of the two conflicting factions namely CPI and CPI (M) that not only created confusion among activists but also because of which the momentum of revolutionary potential was lost leaving the countryside in a state of unquiet. Otherwise the crisis entailed by the Green Revolution, that had created a kulakised peasantry on the one hand and pauperisation of a large section of the rural stakeholders. More recently Ashwini Kumar (2008), Chitralekha (2012) Manoj Kumar (2012, N. Mukherji (2012), P. C. Joshi (2012) and Robert Weil (2013) have also added in depth accounts to the body of literature on the Naxalite movement.

The 'Land-grab' movement, in contrast, remained confined to Basti and Gonda districts of U. P. and parts of Bihar. In Bihar the land grab movement was led by the Lohiyaites - such as Karpoori Thakur who later became Chief Minister of Bihar. Only Rajendra Singh (1974: 44-70) has published his research on the land-grab movement in the Basti District of Eastern U. P. However, it was obvious that although the Naxalite movement has spread almost on pan-Indian scale, it did not become a mass movement as such. It acquired the character of organised, cadre-based militancy, but sustainedby secret organisation, and it continues to be so to date. Even the government authorities and officials have to find interlocutors to contact and have dialogue with the Naxalite groups and their leaders. Whether the supporters of this movement in the tribal regions of India have willingly and voluntarily joined the movement –especially its cadres; or whether they have been succumbing to the tactics of terrorisation, often attributed to Naxalites, is an empirical question1. If the tribal villagers do not support the radical activists of the Naxalitegroups, then those tribals are suspected to be 'Police informants' and sometimesthey are even shot dead by Naxalites (Gawande 2011). Those who sympathise with the cause and strategies of the Naxalites extol their virtues – such as commitment and sacrifice, while there are others who unhesitatingly criticise the Naxalite leaders and activists as nothing short of extortionists.

Of late there is a renewed interest in studying various dimensions and unexplored aspects of the Naxalite movement in different parts of India. In a highly documented and well researched work Sumant Banerjee (1984) has given an authentic account of the first five years of the Naxalite movement in which he was one time a Maoist activist and participant. Banerjee has characterised it as an 'uprising'. Although it was planned to be a revolutionary mobilisation, it did not turn out to be so and what we have encountered since then has been a simmering 'revolution'. Banerjee has given insightful account of the first planned offensives in Naxalbari and in Shrikakulam in Andhra Pradesh which the main ideologue of Naxalite movement had visualised to prove to be 'the Yenan of India' back in March 1969 (*Ibid*: 82-120). This account

is followed by Banerjee's assessment of the movement, its leadership, and its consequences after the formation of CPI (ML) as a separate party and the dilemmas the new party faced in a situation in which its rival CPI (M) had come to power in West Bengal. The state government unleashed repressive measures against the Naxalites; on the other side the guerrilla warfare continued in pockets, especially outside Naxalbari area in cities and towns. In Banerjee's view, the break-out of the India-Pakistan war over the liberation of East Bengal issue and the Indian General Election that followed in 1972, in a sense dampened the spirit and spontaneity with which the Naxalite uprising had started. Moreover for the Chinese government it was embarrassing, if not difficult, to openly support the Naxalites as it was equally a problem for the two super-powers – the U.S.A and the Soviet Union – to get involved, given the fact that China was then drifting away from the Soviet line, challenging its hegemony in the International Communist movement (*Ibid*: 215-248). In that sense 1971-72 marked of the end of the first phase of the Naxalite movement. What happened to CharuMajumdar's stipulation (made in December 1971) 'that the revolutionary movement would liberate India by 1975' (*Ibid*: 254) is for anybody to see.

About the same time Biplab Dasgupta wrote a book giving his version of the genesis, growth and the decline of CPI (ML) sponsored Naxalite militancy at the end of its first phase (1967-72) itself. Dasgupta was known to be an economic advisor to the Chief Minister of the CPM led coalition government in West Bengal later on. Being closely associated with the then ruling party, Dasgupta has documented his account from the CPM's point of view. He has been critical of the CPI (ML) approach to solving the grass roots level local problems, such as exploitation of tribal and marginal peasants' resources (land, water and forests) in India (See Dasgupta, 1974).

Arun Mukherjee (2007) has examined the factors that account for the rise of the Naxalite phenomenon in North Bengal. His focus is entirely on the tumultuous first five years of the Naxalite movement (1967 to 1972). First he has spelt out the rules and disciplinary code of conduct, as well as restrictions, that Naxalite activists had to observe strictly while dealing with the people, including villagers in the initial stage of the movement.. Likewise he has outlined in nutshell the differences between the Communist Party (Marxist) i.e. CPI-M and CPI (Maoist-Leninist) i.e. CPI-ML over the ideology, strategies and tactics of 'revolution'. The kind of unorthodox experiment of unleashing unprecedented violence in Naxalbari and Khoribari, and later also around Calcutta city in the tumultuous years 1971-72 has been discussed in great detail with a critical note on the leadership of Charu Majumdar one of the two chief ideologues of Naxalite movement (Mukherjee 2007: 6-13; also 20-24). An insightful account of the transformation from 'peasant revolutionaries'to urban guerrillas, i.e. from Mao Tse Tung to Che Guevara and the lessons drawn from the Naxalbari struggle has been given in great detail by Mukherjee (*Ibid*:

75-97). Finally, this book also summarises the critique of Charu Majumdar and of the CPI (ML) policies and programmes by the Chinese Communist Party (*Ibid*. 163-68). Mukherjee's work has also documented important statements of a number of Naxalite activists about themselves which reveal several internal factions and contradictions within the movement (*Ibid*. 169-313).

In another fascinating account of Naxalite movement in West Bengal and Bihar, Duyker (1987) has highlighted the role of tribal Guerrillas who were the principal participants in the Naxalite rebellion. According to him the Santal tribals had participated in the militancy and guerrilla warfare during the movement. In his view,

> "the Naxalite movement in West Bengal was the result of the confluence of three basic historical trends: the fragmentation of the Indian communist movement, the increasing polarization of the rural community; and the volatile historical memory and ethnic cohesion of the Santals" (Duyker, 1987: 162-63).

Nowhere in his account has Duyker claimed that the militant movement of Naxalites with the participation of Santal guerrillas had the potential of a mass revolt or that of a full scale revolution. It was confined to tribal parts of Bihar and West Bengal and the Santal's major role in the first phase of the movement (1967-72) was ignited more by their ethnic cohesiveness, cultural identityand memory, rather than by class consciousness.On the contrary, a research monograph by Ashwini Kumar has focussed attention on rather distinct phenomena of caste *senas* (armies) – i.e. private caste armies- that cropped up along with the Naxalite movement in Bihar in the 1970s onwards. They represent different social categories and interest groups that emerged as important stakeholders in the post land reforms period in caste-ridden Bihar where these groups ranged from Maoist revolutionaries, Hindu extremists, and brutal landlords along with predatory politicians. The details of how they all got mingled with each other and unleashed unprecedented violence, including massacre, against the low caste (especially Dalits) beneficiaries of land reforms have been narrated in a fascinating style by Ashwini Kumar (2008: 23-58). In thiswell-researched account Ashwini Kumar has explained the conditions that led to the emergence of Ranabir Sena. It affirmed the identity of Bhumihars as the dominant caste in Bihar and whose atrocities against the erstwhile untouchable (Dalit) castes have been no less brutal than what the Moist revolutionaries – the Naxalites were inflicting on the poor agricultural labourers and tenants (*Ibid*.: 123-66). He has concluded that caste and peasant unrest in Bihar could not be understood in isolation from the agrarian changes in the control of land i.e.changing relations between caste and rural class structure. Even the Naxalite-Maoist movement in Bihar was no exception to this peculiar interface between revolutionary violence and caste atrocities. The conflict between the RanabirSena and the Naxalites in Biharcould not be explained otherwise – a situation that must have been an unexpected development even for the ideologues of the Naxalite movement

on the one hand and also for the beleaguered or fractured state power on the other (*Ibid*. 59-89; also 161-77).

The work by Manoj Kumar (2012) is an elaborate account of the Naxalite movement in Bihar in which he has given an elaborate overview of Bihar, its underdevelopment, and its experience with the changes brought about by the land reforms in the agrarian structure and power dynamics between caste and class intersected by the losers and beneficiaries of the land reform measures in the state of Bihar (*Ibid*: 109-240). There is some account of the formation and the role of caste Senas such as Ranabir Sena, Bhoomi Sena and similar other militant outfits, which, according to Manoj Kumar, were at least partially counter-revolutionary (*Ibid*: 124-31; 270-399). In a more recent work, Chitralekha (2012: 79-125) has confirmed some of the observations of Ashwini Kumar and Manoj Kumar as she has distinguished those Naxalites who are 'committed' from those whom she has called 'opportunists' and 'drifters'.On the basis of this review of studies of the Naxalite movement what one can certainly say is that the Naxalite radicalism may have been a sustained movement for the masses but it is certainlynota movement of the masses. Its manifestations have so far been restricted to specific geographical locales, districts or regions. Naxalites' hide-outs in dense forest areas inhabited by Advasi-forest dwellers and the guerrilla tactics often used by the Naxalites – altogether confirm that, not with standing their commitment to a revolutionary ideology, it was never a mass movement as such, nor it has ever had the potential of developing into any pan-Indian mass revolutionary movement. The latest addition to the growing body of research literature on Naxalites is a work by Robert Weil (2013) who is obviously a committed scholar to the cause of Maoist Revolution in India. His background analysis of the formation of CPI(ML), internal divisions and ideological differences from the first phase to the more contemporary developments in the movement is not substantially different from other studies discussed above. For him the real challenge before the Maoist movement is threefold: How to contain the Guerrilla warfare tactics still being used sporadically by activists in remote parts of the country, how to coordinate simultaneous upsurge in different parts at the same time, and above all how to focus attention on development issues that confront the oppressed sections-such as tribal in India - without whose mass support it would be difficult for the Naxalites to sustain their revolutionary élan and long term agenda? (Weil 2013: 174-267). His conclusions are a blend of scepticism and optimism; he is sceptical whether the 'Torch is really passing?'and at the same time he is optimistic that simultaneous, coordinated revolt may be possible in different parts of India in future.

Another latest addition to the well-researched and analytically rich accounts of the Maoist movement in India, is a book by Nirmalangshu Mukherji (2012) who has arrived at completely contrasting conclusions about the movement to those of Robert Weil. The former is critical and somewhat

pessimistic about the possible outcome of the Maoist militancy and violence manifested in day-to day-reports from different tribal belts of India. The latter is, however, sceptical and yet optimistic about the future outcome of the Maoist mobilisation that Weil hopes may develop into simultaneous rising in different pats at the all India level. N. Mukherji somewhat sympathetically raises the issues arising out of the manner in which the industrial, mining and corporate forces have been encroaching on the resources that the tribal people have traditionally enjoyed access to. This was doubly true in West Bengal; Odisha and tribal parts of Bihar (now called Jharkhnad – a separate state). Very rightly he is critical of the nexus between the Indian state and the ant- tribal interest groups. According to N. Mukherji, although initially the movement was launched as a rebellion against the Indian government by the CPI (M), it was really doubtful whether the CPI (M) cadres were at all dealing with the tribal questions. The author goes to the extent of arguing that the Naxalite militancy may end up in bloody civil war if (a) the Indian state fails to attend urgently the problems of the tribal population, and (b) if intellectuals did not show any prior sympathy to the cause that Maoist movement claims to be espousing. Hence, in N. Mukherji's view, more critical voices are needed if the tribal population is to be freed from the siege created by the Maoist movement on the one hand and lack of effective governance of the Indian state on the other (See N. Mukherji: 2012).

The land-grab movement on the contrary was a short lived micro level phenomenon – a spontaneous collective mobilisation. It was a militant action programme in which participants forcibly, took possession of lands they thought were the surplus land with absentee landlords over and above the land ceiling limits permitted by the law; butagitators suspected that surplus agricultural land was not being surrendered by the landowners/absentee landlords to the state after the land ceiling legislation came into effect. However, barring minor exceptions, physical violence against the targeted rich land owners and *zamindars* was not reported in this protest movement. More so the land-grab did not spread beyond a couple of districts. Neither of the two movements has brought about any major agrarian structural changes, or any drastic changes in power relations in the forest regions of India either at the institutional level or at the policy level so far[2].

Barring the two movements mentioned above, rural India did not experience any major upheaval or agrarian turmoil between 1950 and 1975 – covering roughly the first quarter of the century of planned development in India after the Independence. A note must, however, be taken of the state sponsored *Bhoodan* movement led by Acharya Vinoba Bhave-an ardent Gandhian who in the wake of the peasant insurrection in Telangana (1946-51), launched by the then united Communist Party of India), the *Bhoodan* movement received voluntary donations of land during the *padyatra* (the long march) of Vinoba Bhave and his followers of the Gandhain creed[3]. The impact

of the charismatic leadership of Vinoba, and eventual routinisation of hischarisma, has been well documented in his doctoral work by T. K. Oommen (1972: 26-42). After the Indian state passed legislation for the programme of redistribution of the Bhoodan land- i.e. gifted lands, for their proper implementation state governments constituted Bhoodan committees for supervising actual work of land redistributionin their respective states[4]. Barring these movements it should be safe to argue that practically there was a lull on the agrarian front during 1952 – 1975.

The relative silence of India's rural populace must not be interpreted as its political passivity. The state had initiated a number of institutional measures in an attempt (through the Five Year Plans – the first stared in 1952) to reach the benefits of planned development to rural areas, especially to those engaged in agricultural cultivation and to the landless. First, such measures included the series of land reform legislations. These were undertaken by the state governments since land and land revenue were, and continue to be, the state subjects according to the Indian constitutions. The initiative for introducing land reforms was in conformity with the pledge taken by the Indian National Congress during the last phase of the freedom movement when it had constituted a Committee under the chairmanship of Prof. N. G. Ranga. The Committee had recommended drastic measures such as abolition of *zamindari-jahagirdari* (i.e. absentee landlordism) and 'land to the tiller programme'. Accordingly,in the first phase of land reforms most of the states in the Indian federation had passed such legislations in the areas where land revenue settlement was done under the *zamindari* tenurial system, while in the *Rayyatwari* (owner-cultivator) system of land tenure, the states concerned had introduced a variety of tenancy legislations; because even in these areas sub-letting of farm land for actual cultivation had taken place on a massive scale. This was due to phenomenal rise in land prices as also in the rental value of farm land. Those cultivators, who hadsecured land for cultivation as tenants under oral contract, had no security of their tenures. In the second phase of land reform measures, theland ceiling legislations were enacted in each state in the mid-1950s whereby ceiling of farm land that a person could hold was fixed. Consequently, surplus lands were acquired by the state and a large number of unprotected tenants had benefitted as they secured permanent proprietary ownership right of the land they had been tilling for generations[5].

Not with standing the best intensions with which land reform measures were enacted, their actual implementation left much to be desired. In the former Princely states of Hyderabad, Jammu and Kashmir, and also in the state of Karnataka during the Chief Ministership of Devraj Urs, the implementation authorities, namely the state bureaucracy, gave full effect to the provisions of the land reforms, abolition of *zamindari, jahagirdari* and land ceiling legislations Yes a great deal remained to be done to change

structure of agrarian relations at the grass roots (See Rajan 1986: 88-118). In most other states, especially in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, the implementation was not quite effective; because, revenue bureaucracy had left loopholes in the implementation of land tenurial reforms. The maximum advantage of such half-hearted implementation was taken by the erstwhile absentee landowners, entrenched in local power structure, who pressurised their poor tenants to declare that the latter had voluntarily surrendered their tenanted land to their owners. Thereby, not few *zamindars* succeeded in getting tenanted lands converted into *khudkashta* (self-cultivated land earmarked for family maintenance) lands. According to H. D. Malaviya (1955) of the total tenanted land that, after the abolition of absentee landlordism, should have gone to tenants, nearly 85 per cent could be retained by the landlordsthemselves while proprietary rights of about 15 per cent of the tenanted lands could be actually transferred to the tenants. In Bihar, as also in UP, the ceiling laws were flouted by (i) either parcelling out surplus land and registering them back-dated in the names of close or distant relatives, or even through *benami* (fake) transactions, (ii) or by filing petitions in courts and thereby delayingthrough litigation the process of transferring surplus land to actual tillers - tenants. One thing is, however, certain; the series of land reforms had put the landed elites on the back-foot whether in Thanjavur in Tamil Nadu, Andhra, and Karnataka or in U. P. and Bihar. The erstwhile tenants had now acquired land rights thathad given them a place and stakes in newly emerging rural power structure and networks of resource distribution whether rural credit through cooperative banks and credit societies or variety of agricultural schemes. They were unlikely to launch any protest movements soon after 1957-58 because the changing rural scenario had begun to raise hopes than despair among farming communities all over the country.

Another major institutional measure was also introduced by the Indian government in the form of the Community Development Programmes (hereafter CDP) as a part of its Five Year Plans. Through CDPa number of welfare activities were undertaken by the state for improvement in rural literacy and education, health, agriculture, irrigation, rural infrastructures – such as road construction, transport, electricity etc., and variety of cultural activities for villagers - both men and women were also implemented by the Block Development officers (BDOs). However,at the end of the Second Five Year Plan (1957-62) these BDO-centered development initiatives of CDP activities were eventually brought together under the new dispensation of the *Zilla Parishad*– District Councils (ZPs) in 1961-62. The tasks of development administration were then taken out of the jurisdiction of the revenue administration that continued to be under the District Collector. The entire package of the CDP – i.e. the idea, programmes, and funds to implement them – was imported from the United States in the form of a soft loan the U.S.A. offered to India (under PL 480) in the 1950s. The soft loan was given to India to facilitate the import of the American wheat to tide over food shortages

in India, while the condition of the loan was that its repayment thatIndia would be making in Rupee currency, while the U.S.A. had to spend it in India itself. Major criticisms against the Community Development Programmes could be summarised thus: (i) that benefits of the programmes were more accessible to the CDP headquarters in the towns where Block offices were located than they were to remote villages. (ii) When they did reach grass roots villages, most benefits were grabbed mostly by the rural rich land-owners and political grandees. (iii) The development activities were for the people and not by the people. This implied that participation of the people in implementation was lacking totally. Therefore, at the end of the first phase of the Community Development, the activities introduced at the government's initiative could not be sustained subsequently[6]

At the time of India's Independence and transfer of power India was facing acute food shortages. These were attributed partly to the post-Second World War situation in which food production was either neglected or had plummeted due to repeated droughts and famines (1943-45). Agricultural economy of India was totally neglected during the colonial period due to lack of investments by the British government for improvements in methods of land cultivation through irrigation projects, and variety of new inputs in the form of fertilizers, pesticides, new seed varieties, and new agricultural implements and technology. Consequently the agricultural economy had by and large remained backward and stagnated barring pockets of Punjab (including Haryana), parts of South Gujarat, southern part of Maharashtra, and Karnataka where efforts were made to tap water resources through new irrigation schemes during the latter half of the colonial period itself. These development initiatives were taken either by rulers of the Princely states or by the rural cooperatives from the beginning of the twentieth century. In other parts of India lack of literacy among the rural population was also one of the reasons why agricultural practices showed no marked improvement. To tide over the problem of food shortages, the Indian government launched what was then called as "Grow More Food programme" in the late 1940s and early 1950s. State governments all over the country were required to set up separate departments for the programme's effective implementation– with the staff responsible for managing civil supplies, such as grains, pulses, sugar and kerosene through fair price shops (then known as Ration Shops). However, these measures brought no major relief to the people, especially to the rural and urban poor. The main reason was that food production in India was not commensurate with the growing needs of her population.

The Green Revolution and after

Any attempt to describe the welfare measures - such as land reforms, community development programmes, "Grow More Food" campaign, and also decentralisation through *Panchayat Raj* institutions as 'failure' would be

somewhat misleading. Factors like deficiencies in available resources (at the disposal of the implementing authorities/agencies), lack of technical know-how, and the mind-set of the revenue bureaucracy that was not adequately trained for undertaking work of developmental administration are often glossed over. From the 1960s onwards the new institutional outfit under the Zilla Parishad (ZP) did bring about some change but its development oriented administrative staff looked to their 'welfare' role and activity as a stop gap arrangement because the staff could be transferred back and forth between ZP and the Revenue administration. For the staff of the former, therefore, the latter continued to be the ultimate destination in government service and also the role model! To meet the challenge of perpetual food shortage in the country, the Indian government finally launched what is known as "the Green Revolution" which since the mid-1960s has been the dominant orientation for rural development programmes. As a strategy it implied the introduction of high yielding varieties of seeds, extensive use of farm machinery, energised well irrigation, and use of high doses of new chemical fertilisers and pesticides - all aimed at improving food production. The high Yielding Varieties Programme (hereafter HYVP), i.e. the foundation of the Green Revolutionwas introduced in 1966-67, and it started showing its positive results. Within five years i.e. by 1972-73 India's overall food production recorded a rise of 19.1 per cent over the food production of the pre-HYVP period. This increase was 87.2 per cent in Punjab and 64.90 per cent in Haryana – the chief wheat growing states (Vyas, 1974: 67-70). Correspondingly the daily wages for agricultural labour also increased by 89 per cent from 1961 to 1968. However, this so-called gain for the rural poor was offset by the rise in prices by about 93 per cent for the same period (Dhanagare 1987: AN 137-38).

Ignoring these stark realities of the growing social inequalities in rural India even after the introduction of the Green Revolution measures, quite ironically at the 50th Independence Day of India, the President of India in his speech had mentioned 'near food self-sufficiency as a landmark achievement' in the sense that it had transformed agriculture in the country. There is, of course, no denying of the fact that the visible growth rate in food production in India had to be credited to the enthusiasmwith which the HYVP was launched and the way it was facilitated by the PL 480 soft loan under which the Green Revolution measures could be undertaken. The impact of the Green Revolution was not confined to growth in food production alone, but also it was visible in new improved farm practices by farmers. Currently India is reported to have 40 million tonnes of surplus grain – mainly wheat (>25 MT) and that the subsidised food grain price has also improved per capita consumption.(Nagarajan, n.d. : 1-2). To ensure that the surplus food production does not result in complacency, lest it leads to eventual sharp decline in food surplus, the Indian Agricultural Research Institute Delhi identified pedigree of some 25 major seed varieties of wheat, introduced in different regions that resulted in per hectare yield of wheat. This was largely due to intensive

cultivation through use ofenergised well irrigation, new seeds, fertilisers and farm machinery (*Ibid*: 16-19) No wonder that several trans-national companies, in collaboration with some Indian producers, started production of hybrid as well as genetically modified seed varieties and new chemical fertilisers.The first of these new seeds companies to have foreign collaboration – namely MAHYCO was started in Maharashtra in the 1960s itself.

As we have argued elsewhere (Dhanagare, 1984; pp. 171-201) the Green Revolution hadkindled the hopes of the Indian farmers, who were dreaming prosperity and looking forward to reaping the benefits of new farming technology. However, they began to experience despair resulting from two contradictions unleashed by the Green Revolution in rural India. First, while the agricultural *productivity* had increased remarkably, as mentioned above, the agricultural *profitability* had sharply declined simultaneously. During the intermission of 1952–75 farmers were patiently waiting and expecting profitsto rise and accrue to them from their investments in new farm practices – such as shift in crop pattern from subsistence to commercial crops, and switch over to new farm technology of energised well irrigation, fertilisers and so on. They became increasingly dependent not only on the market but also on the government, that practically had monopoly control over fixing agricultural support prices, especially procurement prices of grains for distribution through fair price (ration) shops. This led to shared frustration and collective discontent among the farmers. The second contradiction was that although on the one hand agricultural prosperity was evident in the use of tractors, wheat thrashers and other farm tools parked in front of some rich farmers, (at least as such prosperity was visible in the highly publicised 'success stories' of the Green Revolution areas of Punjab and Haryana), on the other hand social inequalities and rural poverty were both on the rise (Dhanagare, 1987: AN 142-43). It was on the backdrop of these contradictions that new farmers' movements in India gathered momentum in the 1970s and early 1980s.

The new farmers' movements of the 1970s have some notable features. First, unlike the peasant movements of the pre-1950 period, when most of the peasant protests were confined to specific regions, districts or one or two states in India, the new farmers' movements mobilised support, though not well-orchestrated, from almost all over India, barring exceptions of Kerala, West Bengal, and the North-East. Secondly, these movements haduniform demand for cost-based agricultural prices for the farm produce and other related economic demands of farmers – such as reduction in electricity tariffs, diesel prices, supply of subsidised seed and fertilisers,loan-waivers, removal of zone restrictions on the movement of farm produce to markets outside the state and the like. Thirdly, the methods and strategies of agitation of the farmers' movements were also quite similar like: boycotting *mandis* (i.e. refusal to sell farm produce in market yards), refusal to sell farm produce at low prices, blocking highways and railway tracks. *morchas* (protest marches)*, dharanas,*

and the like. Similarly, barring few instances, the farmers' movements eschewed violence, arson and looting. Finally, its leadership came mostly from among the farmers themselves and at least some leaders, were (and are) intellectuals in their own right, and had capacity to articulate the farmers' demands - justifying them both theoretically and ideologically. For the first time in the history of protest movements in post-colonial India, the new farmers' movements were advancing not only new agendas but also presenting new ideas in theoretical and ideological discourses. These movements thus started questioning the ability of the Indian state to face the rapidly advancing mighty global capitalism that was penetrating the Indian farm sector and to respond creatively to the challenge posed by the paradox of rising productivity and declining profitability that the post-Green Revolution situation had resulted in crisis in the farm sector. Moreover, their leaders were capable of articulating the movement's ideology in a language that farmers could comprehend. 'New ideologues of the farmers' movement could identify themselves with the woos of the farmers as they could relate their ideas to the everyday life experiences of the farmers. However, this new articulation of ideology was quite unfamiliar to the then prevalent political discourses as also to political class and policy makers. In the Indian state's policy-planningframework then hackneyed phraseology of capitalism, socialism or simple straightforward nationalism. The ideology of farmers' movements was a blend of economism and populism in which the movement's leaders were presenting calculations of cost of farm production and the hiatus between the low support prices being offered to farmers and the rising costs of farm inputs. Such rational arguments were unheard of in the pre-Independence peasant movements.

The first tremors of the farmers' movement were felt in the early 1970s in Coimbatore district of Tamilnadu where the rich landowners, who had already been affected by the land reforms, were now turning to cash crops and also some of them to entrepreneurial pursuits. However their incomes dropped down on account of lower prices of agricultural produce and also due to rising wages of agricultural labour on which rich farmers were increasingly dependent. Here the discontent was directed against the government whom agitating farmers held responsible for the economic crisis. Hence, under the leadership of Narayanaswamy Naidu, the *Tamilaga Vyavasavigal Sangham* (i.e. the Tamil Nadu Agriculturists' Association –TNAA hereafter)–the farmers organisation -launched agitationin 1973 demanding reduction in electricity tariffthat the state government had increased. Most of the rich farmers were using energised pump-sets. The Association also demanded remission of loans farmers taken from cooperatives, government sources and also from private moneylenders (Nadkarni, 1987: 60-65). They were also asking for adequate supply of electricity, diesel oil (for tractors etc.), fertilisers and other agricultural inputs at subsidised rates. The government instead increased electricity charges in 1976. In the following year the TNAA then was practically

on war path with the government. To secure support of the agricultural labour as an ally of TNAA, the leaders also demanded that farmers be paid Rs.1000/- per acre as a subsidy so that they could pay higher wages to labour (*Ibid*. : 66). The farmers spontaneously started blocking roads-traffic, destruction of bridges, and *gheraos* of bank staff. The Tamil Nadu farmers'agitations continued throughout 1976-77.

About the same time similar spontaneous mobilisation of farmers took place in Punjab, Haryana and the Western part of Uttar Pradesh –the proverbial heart-land of the Green Revolution. Here farmers were mobilised under the banner of the *Bharatiya Kisan Union* (hereafter BKU). The farmers' organisation in Punjab was then considered as a non-political platform though it hadhad friendly relations with the Akali Dal known to bethe political party of the Jat Sikh farmers started by their then prominent leader- Master Tara Singh. Prior to the crisis in the farm economy, the farmers of Punjab and Haryana were drawn into political struggles , sometime by the Praja Mandal Party and at times by the *Kisan Sabha* started of the CPI and CPI(M), and *Kirti Kisan* Union floated by the CPI (ML) (See Gill, 1994: 195-96). However, with the development of capitalist agriculture and the rise of the rich farmers in Punjab,particularly after the Green Revolution, the left parties in Punjab receded into the background. The new mobilisation by the BKU completely marginalised the left wing farmers' organisations after the first phase of the Green Revolution. More importantly, even small farmers in Punjab had turned to commercial farming, and had marketable surplus due to higher productivity. The main reason for the farmers' discontent was that during the 1978-80 period the prices they received for their farm produce were far lower than the prices they had paid for seeds, fertilisers and other agricultural inputs for achieving record output (of wheat and paddy). Thereby the terms of trade between the agricultural and non-agricultural sectors of the Punjab economy had been completely offset and disrupted to the disadvantage of the farmers. Secondly, due to short supply of diesel, its fuel price had gone up and consequently tractors and other farm machinery,that was lying idle, had gone out of order. The BKU then started *morchas* protesting against these difficulties, while the Akali Dal government (then headed by Prakash Singh Badal as Chief Minister) was unableto bring any relief to farmers (*Ibid.*: 198). The BKU then withdrew its support to the government. The Punjab state government was also then backed by the right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), while the Union government was firmly in the grip of Indira Gandhi who had returned to power after the debacle of the Janata coalition government (1977-79). Indira Gandhi was interested in breaking the Akali Dal-BJP alliance and hence was in no mood to oblige the Badal government in Punjab either by raising the procurement price of the wheat or by reducing the diesel prices. This impasse led to BKU starting agitation boycotting their *mandis (*market yards) refusing to sell off wheat at the low price offered by procurement authorities. The Union government, under Indira Gandhi then did not hesitate to import wheat stocks

from the U. S. A. at a price much higher than what the Punjab farmers were demanding. This was clearly aimed at breaking the ruling Akali-BJP alliance in Punjab, but in this political one-upmanship the farmers had become just pawns in the game. Realising this BKU further intensified its agitation.

The farmers' movement in Karnataka in the early 1980s was led by the Karnataka Rajya Raita Sangh (KRRS hereafter) – an organisation based in Shimoga (one of the districts in the state) Its leadership articulated a lofty ideology of building a new World order and rural reconstruction on the lines of the Gandhian idealism of *Hind Swaraj*. At the same time the KRRS also attempted to blend that ideology with neo-Marxism of Andre Gunder Frank known as the dependency theory. Similarly, the KRRS has been critiquing capitalism and imperialism to which it attributed the debacle of agricultural economy that was suffering in the Third World. Obviously, leadership and ideologues of KRRS were keen to demonstrate its ideological roots inthe Lohia brand of socialism (Assadi, 1997. 124 -29) The anti-Dunkel draft position of KRRS won for it some friends and allies in the All India Coordination Committee of the new farmers' movements, no doubt; but this position also created some distance and later dissentions among some state level framers' movements and their leadership. In a detailed study of KRRS - led farmers' movement in Karnataka, Muzaffar Assadi has characterised it as out and out a movement of the rich peasants – a social category that emerged out of the capitalist development in agriculture in that state. It comprised of members drawn mostly from the dominant castes from different areas in Karnataka. Through the mobilisation of farmers on economistic demands, the class of rich peasants, having experienced economic prosperity, tried to establish its hegemony, by formingan alliancewith other parties and to capture political powerwith the support of the organisational structure of KRRS (Assadi, 1997: Preface). In our view Assadi's attempt to understand the farmers'' movement in Karnataka in the 1980s into the straight jacket theoretical and conceptual categories of Marxist class analysis appears to be over-simplistic, if not rhetorical. Our attempt to understand the farmers' movement from the mid-1970s onwards ought to go beyond the exclusive application or use oftraditional class analysis and conceptual categories of orthodox Marxism. It is necessary that our analytical exercises must be aimed at understanding structural changes in political economy that entailed complexities of responses of rich farmers and also small or medium level farmers who achieved reasonable success in inclusive mobilisation of the marginalised sections along with them on the demand for remunerative farm prices and related agrarian issues.

The rise of the Bharatiya Kisan Union (hereafter BKU) in the Western Uttar Pradesh (U.P.) has been closely observed and studied by Dipankar Gupta (1988) and Zoya Hasan (1989). Both have pointed out that the Jats who constitute one of the dominant castes in Western U.P. and their clan organisation called *Khap* – that has hold over its members in the rural

hinterland were chiefly responsible for massive mobilisation of farmers in the 1980s. Gupta has attributed the movement's partial success in compelling the government to concede some of its 35 demands to the kind of "country–town nexus" that has given some political space and leverage to the caste organisation. Chaudhury Charan Singh -the prominent Jat leader who had been the Chief Minister of U. P. (and also the Prime Minister for a short time after the debacle of the Janata Party coalition government in 1979) was mainly responsible for carving out the niche for the Jats into the national political arena. Charan Singh was the first Jat leader who gave them opportunity of political participation and to play a major role in the U.P. state politics[7]. However, Mahendra Singh Tikait, who led the main farmers' agitations of the BKU, mainly in the Western U.P. where the Jats constitute the dominant caste. The agitating farmers blockaded Meerut Commissionrate, but scrupulously kept away party politicians, and preferred to stay away from mainstream politics. In fact Tikait treated political parties and their leaders almost as 'untouchables' (Hasan 1989: 2665). This attitude of undermining leaders of other political formations and farmers 'movements seriously restricted the scope of forming an all India farmers' alliance and coordination committee.

Zoya Hasan has also attempted to analyse the BKU in UP within the framework of changes in the political economy, and emergence of a class of rich farmers who were drawn deeply into the vortex of capitalist farming and market economy though in different degrees. However, that development in itself does not explain adequately the phenomenal success in mobilising farmers nor does it provide any answer to the question as to why the BKU leader like Mahendra Singh Tikait adopted an apolitical stand and treated political parties and leaders disparagingly.

Approaches and Perspectives

Studies of social movements and a variety of protest movements in India have been attempted following diverse conceptual framework, analytical perspectives and methodologies. Researchers' armoury included innovative techniques, rare documents produced by movement's leaders, ideologues and activists during their campaigns, their personal correspondence and private papers (where available), official records, and studying oral traditions, besides survey methods of data collection. Movements they studied also ranged from primitive rebellions, millenarian uprisings, short-lived outbreaks like riots, protest morchas, to *Satyagrahas* in the Gandhian tradition, strikes, boycotts and even planned and sustained offensives against perceived class enemies – whether revolts or insurrections or insurgencies launched by political parties and justified by ideologies. Some of these movements had even sought to demolish the power base of the existing ruling class/classes and even to question the constitutional legitimacy of the state. Of course, any revolutionary

movement has not been a part of the Indian historical experience as it did in England, France, Russia, China, and so on. A review of approaches and methodologies adopted by researchers so far would be useful here.

Tracing the trajectory and Life history

The most basic, as also common, approach used by scholars in studying social movements has been to trace life histories of movements. It is quintessentially the same as attempting ethnography of a movement. Technically the life history approach involved tracing the entire trajectory of a movement, whereas ethnographic approach will give priority to meeting, interacting with participants, activists and leaders of a movement, to observe their relationships and activities -whether it is an on-going movement or it is one that has been consigned to history. In tracing the trajectory scholars usually probe the stages of development of a movement, the ups and downs it witnessed in the course of its mobilisation, its methods of agitations, agenda of demand and targets, goals and objectives (such as demanding basic changes in institutional structure and reforms or short term immediate demands or relief), movement' leaders, ideologues, activists, and participants– their social origins, and sources of their inspiration. Such an approach is enormously useful if the investigator has recorded personal narratives of active participants in the movement. Interviews of those who have suffered injuries during agitation and/or in police action (such as lathi charge or firing) and/or have undergone a jail-term can be an extremely tool for studying a movement. Such selective but qualitative data often yields valuable insights into the motivating factors of the active participants. Usually such studies finally look into the outcome of the movement and compare the same with the objectives and demands it has been launched with. Whether in the ethnography or the trajectory approach, a researcher's interest is primarily confined to tracing the past and the present of the movement, or 'everydayness' of a movement –in the life of its participants, activists and leaders. Such accounts usually close with the narrative (or analysis, as the case may be) and add some observations on the movement's aftermath, with some comments about the lessons drawn from the movement studied. Getting to the motives underlying decision to participate in a movement, or be its full-time activist, to reflectively assess the commitment to leadership and to the movement's ideology, often involve detailed and intensive, may be participant observation or even use of tools of social psychological tests that are not easy to administer nor is it normally practised during one's field work by a social scientist in studying social movements. Of course the actual deployment of method would vary in a study of an on-going movement and the movements that have become part of memory and history.

In this context it may be pertinent to mention the 'method of sociological intervention' as suggested by Alain Touraine According to him most social relations and processes are not readily visible or observable as some of them

remain masked by structures of order and domination. Social movements as a social reality are no exception to this general observation. Sociologist's chief problem is how to bring out these hidden processes and patterns to the surface. This, according to Touraine, presupposes active intervention of the sociologist. To understand dominant values and moral categories that activists and participants of a movement subscribe to, a sociologist ought to form a team of like-minded researchers; they have to be a part of the movement's everyday life, work and think along with actual activists and participants, but only after declaring their identity, and not concealing it. They must talk to activists and supporters, as also to those who are opposed to the objectives, strategies and agitation methods of the movement concerned, so that this team gets a holistic picture of the movement, its leaders, their motivation, commitment to ideologies, intra-movement patterns of order and domination and so on (Touraine, 1981: 139-149). Broadly speaking this method of sociological intervention is akin, or belongs to the genre of, what ethnographers and social/cultural anthropologists have been talking about 'participant observation'; it was used extensively by anthropologists in India till about 1960s. Though this method may not have become extinct, after the advent of the survey-sampling type method, that enables a researcher to add statistical sophistication to his/her armoury of research tools and technology, participant observation has practically become a part of the archaeology of sociology. It is now again being reinvented and is becoming increasingly popular across the board in social science researches. We have, however, not come across any study of a social movement in India that has consciously used participant observation, let alone Touraine's method of 'sociological intervention'[8] In either the life history or in the ethnography approach an *apriori* choice of an analytical scheme is not indispensable though it is desirable. Such studies do, of course, begin with carefully chosen conceptual categories; but their narratives and exploratory attempts do often throw up significant analytical insights that provide leads to those interested in movements' studies.

Theory of Resource Mobilisation

In the 1970s and 1980s when some American social scientists turned their attention towards newly emerging phenomena of mass protests and movements all over the world, especially in post-colonial societies, theory of resource mobilisation emerged as a dominant perspective (See MacCarthy and Zald 1973; also 1977). They have attempted to present an alternative explanation of social movements as a response of people affected by the crisis resulting from resource crunch. In a sense this theory advances multiple factor analysis that yields multiple explanations[9]. It has tried to highlight the important role of resources, organisation and political opportunities that determine the emergence or absence of social movements. A number of scholars, for instance Oberschal (1973) also asserted the usefulness of the resource mobilisation theoretical approach. Earlier research studies of social movements

suffered, according to protagonists of this theory, from limitations of traditional social psychological perspective that viewed social movements nothing more than 'collective behaviour' that is sporadic, irrational and unorganised (like crowd behaviour, or riots). In contrast the resource mobilisation approach examinesmovements as a part of organisational dynamics, strategic problems of having to appeal diverse constituencies to demand resources and also control mass insurgent behaviour (Jenkins 1983; 18-75). Also, such an approach helps a researcher to analyse social movements and understand them interms of institutional action (Oberschal 1973; MacCarthy 1973; 19770. It is apparent that resource mobilisation theory approach emphasizes the importance of structural factors and that explains it has been used for understand a wide variety of ecology movements, civil rights movements, linguistic identity or anti-caste movements, in short what are known today as 'new social movements.

An important study of the People's Science Movement (PSM hereafter) in Kerala (and also All India PSM)), S. Sahoo and B. K. Pattnaik (2012: 37-41) have used the conceptual framework of 'Resource Mobilisation' and have attempted to highlight the network the PSM used for garnering material and financial resources as well as human resources such as organisational and intellectual resources (*Ibid.*: 37-52). The movement aims at an equitable and sustainable development within which it wants to use science for fulfilling needs and also to mould the state policies to that end. However, it does not go into the theoretical discourse on resource mobilisation as such. In a recent study of the Chengara movement in Kerala (India) researchers have observed that the mobilisation was in the nature of 'new social movement' launched for liberation of the downtrodden. They have used the resource mobilisation theoretical framework and found its focus is mainly on the 'processesof mobilisation', and not so much on the causes of a movement. For understanding the complexities of the Chengara movement, the theory does offer an alternative way of looking at the movement as an institutional action and strategy of mobilisation but does not provide any sufficient explanation (Manosmita, *et al*, 2012: 33-34).

The Marxian Perspective

Social scientists, especially sociologists of social movements, have been interested in understanding structural aspects of organisation of the movement, location of leaders and ideologues within that structure, and their social origins, and above all the class character of the movement itself. For example A. R. Desai' work on the social background of Indian nationalism has proved to be pace-setter in using the Marxist conceptual categories and theoretical premises in understanding the development of Indian national movement and various ideological strands within it. Following that conceptual and analytical framework – that is broadly the Marxian framework – studies on the new farmers' movements have been undertaken by Muzzaffar Assadi

(on Karnataka Rajya Rayyat Sangham), D. N. Dhanagare (on Shetkari Sanghatana in Maharashtra), Sucha Singh Gill (on Bharatiya Kisan Union - BKU in Punjab), and Zoya Hasan and Dipankar Gupta (on the BKU in Uttar Pradesh). The last two of these researchers have, however, focussed more on the role of primordial loyalties of caste, clan organisation and religious politics in the mobilisation of farmers by the BKU in U.P. CornelliaLennenberg(1988) and VibhaArora (2001: 84-121) have also studied the farmers' movement under the leadership of Sharad Joshi when the Sanghatana's agitations in Maharashtra were in full swing. Lennenberg (1988) has broadly used class analysis approach and has questioned Gail Omvedt's decisive observation that 'the new farmers'movement in Maharashtra is clearly a rich farmers'movement as higher prices for farm produce would benefit them more than the middle peasants, who also go to the market with farm produce to be sold and buy things that they do not produce. In this exchange activity, middle peasants do not stand to gain' (Omvedt 1984; also Lennenberg, *op. cit*. 152-53). While attempting to examine the 'middle peasant thesis' of Eric Wolf and Hamza Alavi, Lennenberg has substantiated the thesis that middle peasant is not only present in the movement but they play a major role in it. On the contrary Arora has examined the validity of the 'new social movement' approach in studying the farmers' movement. Arora first discusses the question whether or not the farmers' movement could be considered as 'New social movement' in the way Gail Omvedt has used that framework Then she examines whether it could be considered as the 'dominant class' movement. Finally she has argued that the farmers' movement is not a new social movement in the strict sense of the term, and concludes that although class domination is evident in the mobilisation, material interests of the dominant class are slightly undermined, but not entirely subdued by class politics. The movement's ideological discourse has streaks of anti-state populism. Arora did discuss to some extent the basic features of 'populism' (*Ibid*: 92) but quintessentially she prefers to understand the movement within the framework of class analysis that takes into account 'dominance' but not 'hegemony' (*Ibid*: 94) of the dominant class.

In the Marxian perspective, however, the idea of class interests and class conflict is considered as a key to the understanding of social movement, its structural location and its role in bringing about social transformation. The conflict of class interests between those who have control and ownership of resources and means of production, and those who are actual producers of surplus value, but have no access to either the surplus generated by them or to ownership, is considered as inevitable. This contradiction is overcome by collective mobilisation in which class ideology plays a decisive role in the sense that it is instrumental in creating class consciousness among the class of exploited sections such as the workers

Broadly speaking there are two different ways in which the concept of ideology is used in movements' studies within the Marxist framework. First,

ideology is seen as the medium through which people are mobilised for collective action seeking redress of injustice and their privations. The oppressed and exploited people must also become conscious of their own structural locations from which they have to fight either to maintain *status quo* or to bring about structural change in power relations. The role of ideology is thus crucial in conscientisation of the people mobilised for such a transformative purpose. The other sense, in which the concept of ideology is more commonly used even within the Marxist framework, has to do with the struggle between different class ideologies and their relationship to non-class ideologies. Marx and Engels in their later writings, such as in *The German Ideology* have more seriously characterised 'ideology as false consciousness'; it implied that it is a process accomplished by a thinker, leader or an ideologue. It is in the second sense that the concept of ideology has become more dominant in the contemporary Marxist tradition (Therborn, 1982: 3-4) but is rarely used in analysing social movements in India.

Those who use the traditional Marxist approach in the study of social movements are inclined to assume an epiphenomenal relationship between the base (economic infrastructure – i.e. the forces and relations of production) and the superstructure (i.e., politics, ethics, literature, philosophy, ideology, religion and so on), for them it is given. Thereby human behaviour and actions are treated as determined purely by 'economic interests' (in the context of ideology 'class interests'). This implies that class interests produce a suitable ideology to serve its own interests. Thus, an ideology, which is a set of value premises and ideas about the "desired end-states", is simply an instrument of turning 'class-in-itself' into 'class-for-itself' - this being the precondition for a movement to be effective in bringing about fundamental structural transformation. However, there are other notable Marxist thinkers –who also consciously use the same conceptual- analytical categories, including the concept of class, ideology and 'praxis', do not subscribe to a procrustean epiphenomenal relationship between the base and the superstructure. For example especially structuralist Marxists, like Louis Althusser, distinguishes between 'structure in dominance' and 'structure in determination'. Questioning the inclination of those who use mechanistic Marxism, following Nikolai I. Bukharin is *Historical Materialism* (published in 1921), Althusser (2005: 67-86) has argued that structural totality of society can be understood as a "structure in dominance". In this formulation Althusser has suggested that society can be seen as constituted by relatively autonomous and reciprocally determining levels. Thus, economic, political, -state and non-governmental organisation and ideological domains exist in historically specific combinations and hierarchies' (Hitchcock 2012: 317). Althusser is thereby 'positing a relative autonomy of social practices in which ideology is a distinct domain of consciousness. It may even be inscribed in material practice and existing within specific institutions and rituals for the reproduction of capitalist social relations' (*Ibid.* 318)[10]. This clearly implies that at certain stages of a social movement

ideology can act as an effective force irrespective of economic or class interests, and can impact masses relatively independently from their specific class interests.

In the context of analysis of social movements, therefore, following Althusser some researchers view ideological practice, political practice and religious practice, all as social products but distinct entities or categories from 'economic practices' and interests. They are all equal practices and are as much a type of production as material production of commodities is. They are or can be as decisive at least in the short range analysis as material production can be. In other words, social reality being complex, it is subject to multiple causation (Geras, 1985: 16). As such the non-economic production practices can and do mould the course of social movements that aim at structural transformation at least in certain stages of social development or in certain historical situations. In the long term perspective however, the structure *is determined* by the nature of contradictions between the forces and relations of production, and therefore by class interests and class conflict (Althusser, 2005: 89-128).

Within the Marxist perspective, therefore, the structuralists, like Althusser, tend to argue that in different historical epochs economy, polity, ideology, art, religion are all expressions of a single essence. In the form of economism a super structural category like religion or ideology may be seen as passive elements of pervasive economic determinism. Notwithstanding the hierarchy of practices or structures (i.e. classical or orthodox Marxism stubbornly asserting the primacy of economic structure as causal), structuralist Marxists accord somewhat relatively autonomous status to politics, 'ideology' and even ethnicity and religious identity that at times can play decisive role in a social movement. Our approach in the study of the farmers' movement in Maharashtra will be closer to, or more akin to, the position of structuralist Marxists who recognise the significant role of 'ideology' in moulding the course of a movement. In doing so we will not sacrifice the approach of class analysis altogether. However, it would be of great interest to see and to probe how ideological mobilisation of different classes and interests within a farmers' movement is achieved "by domination without hegemony or domination with hegemony"[11].

Subaltern Studies Approach

Peasants have all along remained at the receiving end in colonial India. At times the leadership of the Indian national movement, and from the 1920s onwards also the left wing political formations in India, did try to woo and mobilise the peasantry in an attempt to draw peasantry into the mainstream of Indian politics by the Indian National Congress, and to draw it closer to the organised working class and its trade unions under the banner of the Communist Party of India. However, the peasantry continued to face

oppression and resist it within the agrarian system of production. Within the structure of democratic politics marginalised sections – poorest of the poor, peasant and Adivasis found no space for itself. The situation has remained unchanged even after the Independence till almost the mid-1970s when the new farmers' movements gathered momentum in different parts of India. Meanwhile the Indian *peasant* had become market oriented '*farmer*' although an overwhelming majority of them continued to be subsistence farmers, but now more dependent on the market. This implied that the farmers, whether rich or poor and marginal landholders - cultivated marketable crops expecting good price for their produce so that they could buy things they did not produce.[12] In a weak sense of the terma section of the farmers in India, and especially in Maharashtra even in 1981,could be considered as part of the 'subaltern category'. But an overwhelming majority of them were drawn into cultivation of market-oriented crops for which obviously they were renting in land owned by others into their operational holdings). Early 1980s was about the time when the subalternity and subaltern historiography was beginning to occupy the centre stage in social science discourse on historiography. The call for 'History from below' was not simply an academic rhetoric, but it has also challenged the adequacy and acceptability of the elite versions of Indian history, whether of the neo-colonialist or of the neo-nationalist variety. This major shift in the writing of history came towards the end of 1970s and early 1980s after writings of the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci came to be translated in English and became available to the wider readership in the social sciences. In Indian historiography this paradigm shift was made possible by the painstaking research efforts by what is known as "the Subaltern Studies Collective led by Ranajit Guha. The group's emphasis was, and has been, on the writing of history that until the 1970s was primarily the elitist understanding and reconstruction of Indian history, particularly the colonial and contemporary history.

Ranajit Guha's (1982) seminal work on peasant insurgency in colonial India proved to be the landmark in the process of this paradigm shift. He probed the elementary, but substantive forms in which the protests of the deprived and hitherto neglected sections –whether peasantry or the tribals have manifested throughout the colonial history. However, these were viewed by the authorities as disturbances or riots, and therefore only simply as a 'law and order' problem. Popularly known as primitive rebels their revolts were understood as uncivil, undemocratic, and hence perceived as threat to the paramountcy of the British *Raj*. Seen as acts of sedition, the potential of peasants and tribals as subjects for making their own history was lost sight of completely. Guha's novel and original approach to the study of peasant revolts, i.e. to the study of subaltern forms of protests stirred many young historians and some social scientists who produced a series of similar studies now available in *Subaltern Studies* volumes published from 1985 onwards. There have been numerous protests and revolts in India during the colonial period.

These were called as protests, revolts, rebellions, insurgencies, or simply as civil disturbances. Whether it was the famous *Sanyasi* rebellion in Bengal in the 1790s, the Bhumij Revolt or the Gangaram's Hangama in the 1830s, the Santhal rebellion of 1855, the Blue Mutiny of 1859-62 (i.e. the Indigo revolt), or the Deccan Riots in two districts of Maharashtra in 1875 – all these were spontaneous outbreaks of the masses and these protests were totally unmediated by the elite politics. However, the elite historiography in India had so far brushed them aside and had failed to acknowledge the role these mass protests by peasants and tribals had played in making their own history in whatever elementary form they could. Also their neglect may be because these revolts lacked a sophisticated ideology to justify them. Thus, by and large the Cambridge School of history, the Wigs School and even the Marxist School of Indian history had all focussed exclusively the role Western educated elites played in the making of modern India and their contribution to the rising political consciousness (See Anil Seal, 1968).

Through its sustained efforts in research "Subaltern Studies Collective" has now earned not only its academic acceptability, but also its wider recognition as a major methodological orientation in doing history. It is now nearly three decades since the subaltern Studies group launched its research. An enthusiastic young historians whereby the Indian state into the everyday life of e then deeply committed to reinterpreting the role of subaltern sections, restoring the balance in historical researches that was so far had remained one-sided and when necessary turning the elite history up-side down. The attempts were aimed at constructing the image of the subaltern rebel- whether peasant, tribal – Adivasi, Dalit and so on. Having taken their research agenda forward vigorously without departing from their methodological frame-work, the "Subaltern Studies Collective" now feels that the concept and methods they deployed could no longer carry out the task further meaningfully; because the original project now appears to the group as almost saturated'. One of the key participants of the subaltern historiography project Partha Chatterjee (2012) now feels that the Collective needed new projects, fresh methodological departures and initiatives in which unconventional sources and unprecedented documents would be used. This feeling of being a beleaguered group called Subaltern Studies was confessed by Chatterjee (2012: 44-45) recently. He thought that the meticulous portrayal of the subaltern rebel as both autonomous and sovereign by the Collective today appeared today like a throwback to the days of the British Raj. Obviously, the construct of subaltern rebel, though useful is no longer helping the Group to understand the contemporary Indian peasant.

Such a feeling of uneasiness, though not exactly discomfiture or disillusionment, among the members of the Subaltern Studies Collective is attributed by Chatterjee to the deep penetration by the Indian state into the everyday life in rural society through infra-structure development – such as

roads, water supply, electricity, schools, and health services besides through politically motivated relief works (like distribution of subsidised food grains, seeds and fertilisers and agricultural credit to farmers, as well as the massive rural employment guarantee schemes). Even then the Indian democratic institutions – people's representatives/ namely politicians, and bureaucracy function is such a chaotic manner that mass political actions that gathered momentum (such as the farmers' movements in the 1980s) could not possibly be characterised as rebellions by the subaltern sections. Hence any attempt to understand contemporary mass movements, mass politics and protest action within theoretical paradigm of colonial peasant insurgency or as subaltern rebellion, according to Partha Chatterjee, could be grossly misleading. The farmers movements that emerged as a protest phenomenon since the late 1970s and early 1980s have been mass movements by any standards, whether we consider the BKU movement in U.P. or Punjab, Karnataka Rajya Rayyat Sangh's mobilisation, or the farmers movement launched by the Shetkari Sanghatana under the leadership of Sharad Joshi in Maharashtra – all of them have been mass movements. Moreover these attempts to mobilise farmers were sustained over more than three decades and could no longer be treated as sporadic occurrences. The farmers' protests in different parts of India had a running undercurrent – a common agenda of economic demands that have been founded on certain theoretical formulations and backed by a well thought out ideological justification. This was doubly true of the farmers' movement in Maharashtra whose chief ideologue has been a leader like Sharad Joshi. Therefore, for understanding such a movement, the paradigm of subaltern studies would not only be inappropriate but also somewhat misleading. Therefore, Chatterjee now seems convinced that a theoretical and conceptual framework of populism and populist movements may be better to understand contemporary mass protests, movements and mass politics (*Ibid*.: 47) since the old conceptual structure adopted and practised by the Subaltern Studies Collective has become too inadequate to capture the complex character of the present day mass protests such as the mass movements such as the farmers' movements that have posed a challenge before social science researchers in problematizing them in a suitable analytical framework.

In methodological terms, use of the subaltern studies perspective would pose a major operational problem. Without appearing to be undermining the importance and the quality of research presented by different scholars in the "Subaltern Studies Collective", so far, they have rather liberally used the concept of 'subalternity' as an inclusive social category – and thereby have left some element of ambiguity in defining it. For instance, the small holding Muslim peasant-tenants under the feudal agrarian structure in pre-partition Bengal (of 1926-35 period) were subaltern according to Partha Chatterjee (1982: 9–18). For David Arnold, however, the Gudem and Rampas whose rebellions during the 1839 -1924 in the hilly as well as in the plains between Godavari and Mahanadi rivers of Andhra and Odisha were also 'subaltern' despite

internal divisions among them (Arnold 1982: 88 -93. Likewise the small peasant engaged in commercial agricultural (sugarcane cultivation) and commodity production, but caught between 'operations of moneyed capital on the one hand and credit networks controlled by local politicians in rural eastern U.P., according to Shahid Amin (1982: 40-41) is also to be included in the subaltern category. Likewise the SanatanaSardar Revolt and the Hathikeda Uprising during the Mughal period, studies by GautamBhadra (Vol. II; pp.44 – 55) are considered as outbreaks by subalternity despite the fact that some of these rebellions had an obviously aristocratic linkage (*Ibid*.: 55). Above all the cow protection movement in the Bhojpur region (during 1888-1917) has also been interpreted by GyanendraPandey as a subaltern rebellion, because he thought it was an attempt to consolidate the Hindus, by rallying them around the issue of cow protection to counter the Muslim revivalism and separatism. Pandey characterised that movement as a subaltern assertion because the Hindus involved in the movement belonged to agricultural castes in the middle rungs of the *varna* hierarchy, but had established solidarity with those castes belonging to both the higher castes like Kshtriyas and Kayasthas on the one hand and the lower castes like Harijans and Kahars on the other, The riots around the cow protection issue were partly the outcome of communal mobilisation and partly they were the result of social mobility across the middle and lower castes in U.P. But all these articulations are clubbed as 'subaltern revolts' by Pandey (R. Guha Ed.,Vol. II : 60-129). Similarly agricultural workers in the Burdhawan district and the jute workers of Calcutta have also been treated on par and treated as occupying the subaltern social space during the period 1890 -1940. Normally the jute workers could have been treated as industrial workers. But they have not been considered as organised industrial labour on the ground that in Bengal 95 per cent of them were not organised labour and the trade union movement in Bengal then was very weak (Subaltern Studies, Vol. II, : 259-310).

A somewhat elaborate review of some of the studies reported in the Subaltern Studies series reveals that despite their some brilliant contributions with regard to the colonial period, their contributors have not been able to use the same framework while dealing with the post-colonial period. 'This was partly because of the dilemmas researchers in the Subaltern Studies Collective faced in defining the 'subaltern' as Gail Omvedt (1993 : xiv) has put it.

'New Social Movements' Perspective

Contemporary discourse on 'new social movements' that are popularly conceptualised as "grass roots" movements began in the 1980s. Better known in social science scholarship as contemporary critical theorists, especially Jurgen Habermas (1987) and Jean Cohen (1985) have placed new social movements at the center of their analysis of social movements. For both of them contemporary social movements have to be understood as channels of

outlet for development of new values and identities, and for projecting new development alternatives to the hegemonic linear model of development driven by modern technology. On the one hand they offer 'new interpretations of social life, revitalising a decaying public sphere, and freeing participants of movements from the iron cage of instrumental assumptions' (Tucker 1991: 75). For instance, Habermas (1987) has attempted to focus non-instrumental rationality and its role in public life and has suggested that working class, involved in productive relationships, is not necessarily the catalyst force and a democratising agent. Instead that both Cohen and Habermas describe new social movements as 'non-productivist movements' that have the potential to achieve transformative goals. According to Habermas while equating system-differentiation and class rule, 'Marx was unable to conceptualise the necessary complexity of system practices that at times transcend 'class rule'. Similarly he could not distinguish between dislocation of traditional life - worlds and the destruction of non-traditional life-worlds'(Habermas 1987: 349). Both Habermas and Cohen, especially the latter thought that'new social movements, unlike old social movements (such as the labour/working class movement) have four important features: (i) they do not want to return to an undifferentiated community free of power and inequality, (ii) participants maintain universalistic principle and yet respect autonomy, (iii) their values are not absolute but somewhat relativistic, and (iv) finally actors in the new social movements accept the democratic state and free market' (Cohen 1985: 669-70). Therefore, new social movements reject productivism of the old movements as axiomatic, and provide forum for realisation of new identities that do not confine themselves to an instrumental role for serving a specific class interests and power (*Ibid*: 670). Hence, solidarity attained by new social movements does not develop inevitably into expression of material interests of mutual advantage.

Fully endorsing the analyses of Habermas and Cohen, Kenneth Tucker has argued that 'questions of historical context, of the historical specificity of the social structural constraints affecting social movements must not be submerged into a philosophy of history. The integration of theory and practice demands a consideration of the objective circumstances in which struggles or social movements take place. Therefore, notwithstanding the critical theory approach represented by Habermas and Jean Cohen, examining historical specificity and context is integral to a sophisticated understanding of contemporary new social movements' (Tucker 1991: 92-94).

What initiated this debate 'new social movements' in the context of social movements in India was an article: "Nine theses on social movements" by Andre Gunder Frank and Marta Fuentes (1987: 1503-10). They argued that the new social movements are distinct from other movements that had struggled against exploitation within the class structure and for securing rights to equity and justice. While spelling out the basic features of 'new social movements', Frank and Fuentes (1987: 10) have emphasized their non-party

political character. Earlier some Indian social scientists – like Rajani Kothari, D. L. Sheth, and Harsh Sethi had also described NGOs and voluntary organisations (that we now call civil society initiatives) as non-party political processes. The same view is echoed by Frank and Fuentes about the new social movements. The new social movements, however, are basically "grass roots" level mobilisations which are apolitical. The implicit assumption in their argument was that the new social movements do not necessarily attack the exploitative character of the existing power structure and class-based power relations, nor do they aim at altering the power relations whether within the liberal democratic system of representative governance or in autocratic, authoritarian regimes. According to Frank and Fuentes new social movements spontaneously mobilise people on the basis of questions or issues of identity, morality, justice and social power. Being focussed on specific demands and objectives, new social movements have a shorter life cycle than social movements of the past; they are often grass-roots level and localised collective actions (*Ibid*.: 1507-09). Therefore, NGOs and new social movements have a symbiotic relationship and the former invariably play a decisive role in initiating the latter. T. K. Oommen (2001: 1-16) has characterised new social movements as non-party political, but grass-roots level popular initiatives that are single issue based and anti-state collective actions that tend to erupt due to multiple perceptions of modernity as well as multiple articulations of identities It has been observed that such mobilisations are anti-tyrannical actions of the state, and yet that do not necessarily question the legitimacy of the state nor do such new social movements ever plan or attempt to take over the state power. It is then suggested that such movements are anti-systemic but not anti-state, but simply aim at distributive justice, sharing of economic and natural resources, and striving for cultural identity. Support base of new social movements is both local and thinner, in contrast to the mass based movements of workers, peasants/farmers and identity assertions by Dalits in India. By implication then, both Frank-Fuentes and Oommen are suggesting that there is no mass participation in new social movements. An important feature has been added by Pattnaik (2011: 363 – 65) who has found that leadership and activists of such movements are both from the middle class intellectuals who have ability to articulate movements' ideologies.

In a critique of the 'nine theses' of Frank and Fuentes,, we have argued that the authors of the 'nine theses conspire theoretically to deny political consciousness to the most exploited sections or classes of the society and that they tend to treat new social movements as apolitical assertions of morality and social power (Dhanagare *et al.* 1988: 1089-92). Frank and Fuentes are thus essentialist when they claim that like the women's movement or the environmental movement, the very notion of state or political party power for them (i.e. for small scale community based movements) would negate most of the aims and essence of the grass roots movements like them. Frank and

Fuentes thus reduce new social movements to "grass roots" NGOs mobilising exploited people only at the local level, not on a mass scale.

In contrast the new social movements especially in India are no longer confined to a few rural households behind the bamboo hedges, or to the fenced reserved forest areas, or to *chawls* and slums inhabited by some Dalit households either in villages or in metropolitan cities like Mumbai or Pune. Whether it is the new farmers' movement of the 1970s onwards, the anti-caste Dalit movement, or the women's movement – they all have crossed the structural and cultural boundaries that tradition had drawn for them. They no longer remain within the confines of the NGO spaces only and are now involving masses in aggressive action and take up political issues both at the regional and at the national levels. This is a clear indication that new social movements are not apolitical, as imagined or claimed by Frank and Fuentes. Initially some of these movements might have adopted an apolitical stance. However, now most of these movements are mobilising masses in the political arena, and they are aiming at altering power-structure or at least at redistribution of political power and decision making that affect lives of the marginalised. Therefore, Gail Omvedt (1993) who has vehemently advocated for adopting the 'new social movements approach has rejected the NGO generated ideologisation of social movements and has delineated the characteristics of 'new social movements as follows:

(i)   They are social movements having a broad overall organisation, structure, and ideology that aim at social change (including fundamental changes in power structure and productions relations).

(ii)   Through their ideologies new social movements generate their own definition of exploitation and oppression, and articulate appropriate strategies to end their privations. The term "new" is used to suggest that the traditional Marxism that deals with class-based exploitation is inadequate to explain the nature and forms of exploitation that new social movements have articulated and focussed on.

(iii)   The new social movements are either ignored, or taken for granted, or were even of capitalist appropriation through market, do have unique features that were lost sight of by the obsessive preoccupation of traditional Marxists with 'private property', 'surplus value', and 'wage labour' (*Ibid.*: xv).

(iv)   An exhaustive analysis of new social movements would require a some what modified Marxist framework of a historical materialist analysis of contemporary capitalism. Gail Omvedt has included the new farmers' movement, the ecological /environmental movement, the anti-caste Dalit movement, and the women's movement in India within the ambit of her conceptualisation of 'ne social movements. She is also optimistic that these movements have the potential to reveal insufficiency of traditional socialism as an ideology and to take up the task of what she refers to as 'reinventing revolution' (*Ibid.*: xvi).

An important contribution to the discourse on 'new social movements' came from a special issue of the *Seminar* in 1989. The editor of that issue - Ramchandra Guha, while formulating the poser for the special issue did not endorse the position of Andre Gunder Frank or the position Omvedt took

subsequently. Guha has included only five new movements, viz. women, ecology, science, health and civil liberties. While criticising Frank and Fuentes, Guha has argued that the farmers' movements of Sharad Joshi and Mahendra Singh Tikait variety in Maharashtra and U. P. respectively, the trade union movement of the Indian working class, and also the Naxalite led movements of landless and tribal people have successfully mobilised millions of people. In contrast the popular support enjoyed by new social movements, as conceptualised by Omvedt, has been negligible (Guha 1989: 15). What Guha implied is that all social protest movements that are referred to with an adjective 'new' must not be clubbed together. In our view, without undermining the importance of the growing consciousness on the feminist and ecological issues in India, the support these movements have been able to garner, though not negligible, has not been as spectacular as the farmers' movement, working class three decades.

The discussion above makes it amply clear that the new movements are contrasted with the 'old' in terms of 'moral versus economic' issues they raise, 'small scale versus mass scale' and so on. In this kind of binary the significance of the anti-caste Dalit movement is, according to Omvedt, simply brushed aside. Similarly the success of the famers' movement, especially the one in Maharashtra, cannot possibly be attributed, as Ramchandra Guha does, to its being the 'old' kulak-rich peasant i.e. class based movement. Although the economic interests of rich famers in pushing the demand for remunerative prices for farm produce is an important factor igniting mobilisation, it would be naïve to brand the farmers movement as the rich farmers' or the kulak movement. A simple class analysis of farmers' movement in the traditional Marxist perspective would not, in our view unfold either the secret of its mass mobilisation nor would that reveal the manner in which rich farmers succeeded in its hegemonic influence over the class alliance within the farmers' movement, and also in handling its complexities under the leadership of Sharad Joshi in Maharashtra. Unlike the attempt of Gail Omvedt to theoretically confront the traditional Marxist class analysis, in our view it would be necessary to supplement that framework by another approach that might help us to understand the phenomenal success of the farmer's movement in mobilising farmers of Maharashtra in the 1980s and 1990s on an unprecedented scale; such an alternative framework must also enable us to explain why the movement failed to gain electoral support and success when the movement consciously joined party politics by setting up a separate political outfit called the *Swantantra Bharat* Party.

Populist Movement and Populism as an Ideology: An Alternative Framework

In social science theoretical discourse 'populism' as a concept may qualify to be the most elusive and slippery one. And yet it has been used quite frequently, though not so much in Indian sociology, in studies of social

movements. The term often used to characterise a movement's ideology. However, ideologies of different social movements, characterised as 'populist movements' may not share the same attributes because we find differences in empirical and ontological referents of the movements for which the term populism is used. Sometimes conceptual explications offered by researchers may not be mutually inclusive and they may imply qualitatively different kinds of social movements that get clubbed together causing conceptual confusion. In each instance the concept may connote different meaning. Yet, the concepts of 'populism' (referring to ideology) and 'populist movements' have been used in analytical exercises in social sciences for nearly a century now. Generally speaking populist movements act as catalysing force and often succeed in mobilising masses at times of a perceived crisis situation and such movements have been able to shape the character of politics of the time, or they have radically altered power structure of the time. In spite of its transformative potential, populism, both as an ideology, or as a political force, has a tendency to dissipate, if not dissolve itself and disintegrate altogether.

One common feature of 'populism' as an ideology is that in protest movements it acts as a set of values and beliefs that directs or justifies specific demands, and collective action in their support. In addition populist ideology tends to be diffuse in its essence, lacking consistency, and yet it could be used as a significant driving force by great leaders and also by great masses of ordinary people (i.e. those belonging to non-elite categories). As a form of mass movement or mass politics, populist movement claims to represent the common people as opposed to privileged classes or special interest groups that constitute the ruling establishment or the power block in a given society (Nisbet *et al.* 2001: 11813). Normally populism or populist politics is considered quite distinct from class politics that invariably manifests in the form of political parties and/or organisations. On the contrary mass politics – i.e. populist politics often embodies interests and aspirations, especially multiple, overlapping and shifting interests of groups or their alliances and coalition. Therefore, populism as an ideology or as a form of political party formation is often targeted by elites derisively with disdain and anger (See Taggart 2002: 1 – 2). It is so because such a mass political formation is seen by the ruling elites as a danger to democratic system. For social movements that use populist ideology it is a term of approbation while it is treated as a term of opprobrium by their critics and adversaries from the privileged groups within the ruling establishment.

Populist Discourse and Populist Movements: Historical Outline

The first major populist revolt was reported from the United States of America (U.S.A.) in the 1890s. It was a relatively short lived minor political party with populist ideology, demands and action programmes. Known first as the People's Party it was some kind of a coalition of agrarian interests, of

those farmers seeking important reforms relating to the farm sector, particular in the South and the North-East of the U. S. A. Farmers in these parts were discontented because of cop failures, falling agricultural; prices , and poor marketing as well as totally unsatisfactory credit facilities (Grolier 1993: 132). This People's Party, also later came to be known as the Populist Party, first held a mass convention in Cincinnati in May 1891 and a national convention in the following year (July 1892) at Omaha (Nebraska State). In an attempt to project itself in the mainstream American politics, the Populist Party then formed an alliance with the Democratic Party, one of the two major political parties in U.S.A., and supported James Weaver as the Presidential candidate in the 1892 – Presidential elections. It also fielded its own candidate for Vice-Presidentship. Although the Populists lost this election they managed to get several representatives elected to the U.S. Congress and some three Governors of the States (Hicks 1969: 244). This success gave the farmers' Populist Party some political leverage in the sense they gained at least bargaining power.

The People's Party of the U.S.A. is perhaps the best example or the clearest case of mobilisation of a mass movement with populist ideology. It was perhaps the first ever grass-roots level organised attempt to ventilate the farmers' grievances without any charismatic or national level leader to guide its destiny. The movement, leading to formation of the People's Party was broadly a progressive populism that wanted and aimed at some radical change, but short of revolution i.e. without any basic structural change in capitalist market driven economy (Taggart 2002: 26). As the Populist People's Party won electoral successes at the local, regional and the state levels between 1982 and 1912 their initial demands for farm prices, credit facilities and subsidies went far beyond and their agenda got enlarged aiming at broader reforms. Their demands subsequently included.

(i)   Government ownership of **the** railroads, the telephone and telegraph systems (because costs of transportation of farm produce to markets and communication costs were then rising steadily);

(ii) "Free Silver" (This demand implied mining rights for silver without any restrictions on farmers who were interested in mining within their farms estates).

(iii) Graduated Income Tax – (Farm incomes should be taxed according to the size of the land ownership and farm income);

(iv) A "Sub-Treasury Plan" – This was a demand for creation og go-downs (* i.e. warehouses that would allow farmers to withhold their crops from markets when the prices of farm produce dropped.

(v)   Direct election of senators (implying a demand for unmediated representation – i.e. Direct democracy);

(vi) Immigration restrictions – (Farmers wanted that more immigrant from Europe and Ireland must not be permitted as that would mean more people would come to the U.S,.A. , buy farm land and compete with the existing farmers).; and

(vii) A 9-hour day for industrial workers. (See, Grolier 1993: 132).

These demands of the Populist Party made two short term and long term objectives clear. First, the farmers from the South and South-west wanted to consolidate their position within the political economy of the United States by reducing competition they had to face with new immigrant investors in farm land. At the same time they wanted coloured Africans be given immigration facility so that cheap farm labour would become available. Secondly, their last demand (an eight hour a day etc.) was obviously intended to win over support of non-agricultural industrial workers. The Populist Party was thus keen to build bridges with the industrial working class and form a political alliance.

The economistic demands of the South American farmers clearly revealed that the Populist movement subscribed an anti-communist centrist ideology that posed some challenges before the then American government but did not question the fundamental capitalist ideological structure of the U.S.A. politics. Ironically though, 'the anti-state movement and the discourse of the Populist Party were aimed mainly at seeking reforms of America capitalism, not its rejection or outright overthrow' (Woodward 1960: 159). The populists were somewhat over-simplistic in viewing the government injustices as dividing the American people in two great classes – the millionaires and the tramps, while their popular outcry was against the moral decay. The farmers led by the Populist Party were being made to believe that the conniving and affluent political elite of America was both corrupt and conspiratorial. Moreover they were of firm belief in the innate goodness of the common man (Taggart 2002: 26-28).

The rise of the Populist Party and the famers' movement has to be understood on the backdrop of the defeat of the Southern farmers in the American Civil War (1860-65). Similarly by the 1890s they faced acute crisis caused by virtual economic ruin because in 1983 the U.S.A. witnessed a major economic depression brought about by the banking sector in investment and also due to agricultural crisis. (See, Goodwyn 1976: 13-14). In the national democratic electoral politics, the Populist Party had placed its complete faith with the Democratic Party which saved itself but virtually killed the People's Party. The initial failure of the People's Party and its populist movement did not mean the end of the populist themes and ideas in U.S. politics. However, it was practically compelled to become an institutionalised part - the farmers' front of the democratic politics in the U.S.A. through the Democratic Party. In structural terms it meant loss of autonomy and compulsion to operate or press their populist demands of the farmers only through the national Democratic Party (Taggart 2002: 30-38).

In the 1930s the populist discourse resurfaced in American politics especially in the wake of the Great Depression (1929–34). The populist resurgence then was partly a response to the fear of growing popularity of socialism and communism, and partly it was a result of perception of the "other"

in both finance capitalism and socialism (Brass 2000: 25). As ideology populism did again re-emerge in the U.S.A in the form of Ku-Klux-Klan movement demanding racial segregation of the Black population from the Whites in the 1950s[13] Also George Wallace's politics in the 1960s supporting racial segregation i.e. the politics of race in America had streaks of populism. Likewise populist ideas were also resorted to by Richard Nixon that manifested in his hostility to media. Jimmy Carter, another ex-President of the United States campaigned as an 'outsider' but representing the Southern farmers' lobby and finally Ronald Reagan 's much publicised anti-intellectualism were all expressions of populist thinking. All the three Presidents had used populist themes and appeals to 'people' as an undifferentiated category, though separately in their Presidential electoral campaigns as also in their subsequent socio-economic policies (Taggart 2002: 41).

Usually researchers who study populism as an ideology and populist movements provide a general theoretical structure that would then clarify the concept for operational purposes. In the case of populism however, any attempt at a theoretical construction would meet some objections. Therefore, the tendency is to attempt a theory that would be wide enough and all-embracing to accommodate all possible manifestations of populism – in fact virtually anything that one would like to characterise as 'populist' or 'populism'. The rise of thee Narodniks in the nineteenth century Russia under the Tsarist regime is one such case of populism. After the abolition of serfdom by Alexander -II in the year 1861 Russia witnessed a spontaneous movement that emerged to bring about fundamental radical changes in Russian feudal economy, society and polity. For this purpose the Narodniks started mobilising the peasantry against the Tsarist regime which they thought was the root cause of the privation and misery of the peasantry. Reason for targeting the Tsarist rule was simple. The monarchical state under the Tsar had completely neglected the conditions of the serfs who had been then freed after the 1861- decree (Meyendorff 1963: 505-07); however the existential conditions of the serfs and bonded labour in the day-to-day life of rural Russia had remained unchanged as their freedom was only notional.

Often considered as the precursor of the Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917, Narodniks were a group of young students from urban Russia who in their fervour of youth had romanticised ideas about revolutionary potential of the peasantry. The young groups of Narodniks went to the countryside with a firm, but somewhat naïve, belief that future of Russian society lay with the peasantry. The young brigades of Narodniks were determined to uphold, revive and sustain rural lifestyle. Return to the glorious past of the Russian society was their cherished dream. Using the emancipated serfs the Narodniks wanted to restore the Russian traditional peasant communes and the Russian rural/folk culture. The word *Narod* stands for or equivalent of German *Volk* that means 'people'. The Narodniki was thus a

group of inspired revolutionaries who hoped to bring about emancipation of rural peasantry through socialism without going through the stage of modern metropolitan capitalism. The Narodniks did not lack dedication but had no appropriate strategy to implement their revolutionary ideas nor any plan of actual emancipation of the suffering rural peasantry – bordering on 'populist' theme. They were deeply suspicious of structures and institutions of representative democracy and hated politicians whom they considered to be both corrupt and inefficient. To propagate their ideas the Narodnikis did print and circulate some booklets and pamphlets among the peasantry but had neither any written programme nor a disciplined cadre-based organisation. Consequently their romantic dreams withered away soon when they found peasantry to be having acquisitive tendency, were primarily interested in amassing assets, politically conservative, and deeply suspicious of intellectuals – including the student Narodniks.

Very soon Narodniks moved away from the Russian peasantry and turned their attention quite violently to the oppressive, authoritarian Russian state and its Tsarist regime. Student Narodniks, mostly drawn from urban educated middle class background, were not used to manual labour and hardships of rural life. Therefore they found it difficult to live in village communes as the peasants did and the latter soon started doubting the former's genuine desire and credibility of their professed fundamental change in rural Russia. Thus, the populist movement of the Narodniks of going back to the village to live in communes and to win over the common people ultimately led to terrorist activities against the state.

In 1878 the Russian court conducted a trial of some 193 Narodniki student youths and found 41 of them guilty of 'propagating revolutionary (and hence subversive) ideas among the peasants. This was followed by an unsuccessful attempt at assassination of the Tsar. Thus, in this entire Narodniki movement some features of populism as a universal ideology came out sharply: (i) the claim to represent the common people i.e. the repressed and differentiated Russian peasantry[14] (ii) Utmost hatred towards representative democratic politics; and (iii) an urge to restore traditional way of life. However, Narodniks' ideas about the moral superiority of the peasantry and their own urban elitist social origins quite ironically did not cohere with the ideology of peasant populism (Ulam 1998: 265-74).

The Russian Narodniki movement began with populism as an ideology, but quickly, rather prematurely, moved to revolutionary terrorist strategy and activities – prematurely because the Tsarist Russian state was still strong enough to enforce repression against anti-state populist activism. As Taggart (2002: 57) has commented, 'the populist movement dissipated too quickly because the Narodniks chose 'revolution' over 'populism' and also misread somewhat naively in the revolutionary potential of the peasantry'; both as a movement and as ideological articulation the populism of Peron in Argentina

has been qualitatively different from populism of the People's Party in the U.S.A. in the 1890s and also from that of the Narodniki movement in Russia in the 1870s. Manifestations of the populist movements and populist politics in Latin America have features of state sponsored activism. Populism as it got personalised in the leadership of Juan Peron in Argentina in 1940s during the years of the Second World War is a typical case of populism in its chameleonne nature that was the product of specific crisis entailed by political instability (Di Tella 1965). The result was indigenous response to the economic crisis that in turn was the outcome of delayed dependent capitalist development. In a sense it typifies the kind of populism that emerged in Latin America. It had two inherent ideas: (a) that populism may not necessarily get electoral success and yet it emerges with mass support to the populist movement at a time of economic crisis; and (b) secondly it fails to deliver the promises of fundamental structural changes, because the ethos of anticipated change was reformist and not revolutionary (Malloy 1977: 11-15).

The rise of Juan Peron in Argentina is often referred to as the most classic case of populism in terms of the leadership and essence of ideology that he espoused. Argentina during the years of the Second World War was passing through an unprecedented economic crisis. The military government, prior to Peron, had somehow managed to legitimise itself through electoral fraud in the crisis of the Great Depression (1929-34), but it could not tide over difficulties arising out of Argentina's diplomatic ties with U.S.A. during the Second World War. It was at this stage that Peron seized power with a group of army officers in 1943 (Taggart 2002: 61-62). However, Peron soon realised how mass support was indispensable to sustain political power. For securing this mass support the ruling group under Peron found immense potential force in the labour movement that had a strong organisational base in Argentina. Peron's wife Evita was chiefly instrumental in garnering the support of labour unions and Peron on his part spared nothing while showering largesse on them in the form of wage rises, rent freeze on housing accommodation, and state recognition to the unions. Peron's popularity chart was steadily on the rise because of his direct links with the people who saw in him their long cherished hopes. Peron was dispensing massive programme of policies of redistribution and welfare. In return Peron was able to consolidate his party and its support base. These earned him even more popularity among the Argentinian people. His iconography, his periodic appearing in the balcony of his Presidential residence to greet the masses, and their chanting his name in chorus was bound to arouse jealousy and suppressed hostility among his military colleague in the government who jailed him in October 1945. But by then Peron had already held in esteem by the people as the symbol because of his direct link with the people without which genuine mas support could not be garnered by the government that had to free Peron unconditionally in 1946. In the free elections in 1946 Peron was re-elected as President. His popularity thus put him back in power. He then realised that charismatic leadership is a

good and useful instrument to sustain power in a democratic set up (Page 1983: 165-67). In using that strategy Peron used three rallying slogans – social justice, economic freedom and political independence. These slogans manifested Peron's "Third position" between the American capitalist domination on the one hand and Soviet communism on the other during the cold war years (Crasweller 1987: 227-28).

The U. S. People's Party that represented the farmers from the South and South-West from 1890s to about 1912, the Russian Narodniks of 1870s and Peronism in Argentina, are regarded as the most classic historical instances of populist movements in terms of – ideology, leadership and mass mobilisation. Besides these many other movements have also been characterised as 'populist'- such as the one led by Abdul Gamel Nasser in Egypt, Julius Nyerere, Mao tse Tung in China, Adolf Hitler in Germany, Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress Party during India's freedom movement, the Chartists and Enoch Powell in U.K. and McCarthyism and Jimmy Carter in the United States – all have been clubbed under the concept of populist movements in terms of leadership appeal and ideological articulation. This tendency on the part of researchers clearly suggests that the agreed core meaning has been lacking in the case of populism as a concept (Canovan 1982: 544). Earlier Di Tella (1970: 47-74), in his well-known essay, had defined populism as a political movement that enjoys mass support of either the urban working class or of rural peasantry, that lacks any autonomous organisational power of either of these sections. Often supported by non-working class populism upholds an anti-status quo ideology. Therefore, some analysts have proposed a compilation of specific attributes which can serve the purpose of an "ideal type" construct of 'populism', in the Weberian sense. This, in turn, would enable us to ascertain empirically the degree to which a given social movement, its ideology and leadership could qualify to be conceptualised as populist. Then one can attempt a movement's case study or even attempt a comparative analysis within the framework of 'populism'.. (Collier 2001: 11814).

Based on such "ideal type" approaches of Di Tella (1965), Ionescu and Gellner (1969), Laclau (1979) and Margaret Canovan (1982), an attempt has been made by both Collier (2001) and Taggart (2002) to suggest the following core features of 'populism' and 'populist movements':

(a) Populists identify themselves with an idealised heart-land within the locan community. It implies that mobilisation which is from below has deep roots with the community they favour. While appealing to the people, populists sanctify differences among the people in a positive frame whereas advocates of social justice do so in a negative way (Taguieff 1993: 87).

(b) Populists construct a support base by a discourse that promotes the identity as a people (or mass), rather than as a 'class' juxtaposed against the interests of the 'other'. This 'other' may be ruling elite, a minority, or politicians or bureaucrats who are perceived as both corrupt and conspiratorial.

(c) Populists are generally hostile to representative democratic politics;

(d)   Populism as an ideology lacks core values, but essentially it is anti-status quo;

(e)   Populism is a powerful reaction to a sense of extreme crisis situation, especially economic crisis – whether perceived or real; and

(f)   As an ideology it has a tendency to adopt the colour of its environment; hence it is a chameleon (Taggart 2002: 2) – which is like a lizard having grasping tails long tongues protruding eyes, and of course the power of changing its colours frequently.

In modern democratic societies populism is best seen as an appeal to the people – 'heteronomous or politically subordinated masses. The people are against the established structure of power and also against the dominant ideas and values of the society'. Therefore, populist movements are 'of the people but not of the system' (Canovan 1999: 3)/ They are anti-status quo movement – with mistrust of established power holders and traditional politicians identified with ruling elite (Laclau 1979: 146-470). Populist movements therefore often operate as a 'non class based', or multi-class coalitions with mass support (Collier 2001: 11814). Populist can be militant but not radical in terms their goals and objectives; therefore, they are reformists and not evolutionary either in their ideological orientation or in their strategies for collective action.

Role of the leader in populist movements is both pivotal and crucial because, a particularly strong willed personality having ability to establish direct cords with the masses, not mediated through organisation or political party, can succeed in gaining immediate acceptance of the masses. Ernesto Laclau (1979: 144) considers populism basically as a peasant ideology that appeals to society of small farmers who are opposed to urban interests and big business that are often protected and favoured by the bourgeois state. An important characteristic of populism as an ideology is its theoretical nihilism, i.e. some set of ideas but devoid of any substance or content. Hence, a leader who uses rhetoric and has oratory can and does impress masses and mobilise them with an emotive or moralistic persuasions. It is noteworthy the conceptualisation of 'populism' by Laclau was strongly influenced by the nature of demands that were put forward by the People's Party in U.S.A and also by the kind demands of the working class that Juan Peron's leadership to meet to win confidence of supporters in Argentina. Because these two manifestations of populist movements had demonstrated that although populist articulations are fundamentally anti-theoretical and anti-intellectual, quite ironically, a leader with intellectual background and capabilities of articulation can blend theoretical rationalisation, with its logical rigour, and its emotional appeal and people - oriented rhetoric. We believe that this was true in the case of Sharad Joshi, the leader-ideologue of the farmers' movement (*Shetakariandolan*) in Maharashtra because he could successfully win over mass support through persuasive appeal that he blended with rational theoretical argument. In doing so he convinced the masses (of farmers) that the demand for cost-based remunerative prices for farm produce was a demand based on Rosa Luxemburg's argument regarding the fundamental contradiction

between the interests of farmers in the countryside and the city-based industry controlled by big business and industrialists[15].

According to Canovan populist movements and populist ideology have an uneasy relationship with democracy/ On the one hand populist movement, being illiberal in its ideology is seen as a threat to liberal democracy and to functioning of its representative government. On the other hand there can be a trade-off between democracy and populism. Hence, 'if a populist democracy gets established, then such a political system may entail crude majoritarianism, that in turn can override the rights of minorities. Therefore, democracy has two faces, one 'redemptive' and the other 'pragmatic'; according to Canovan 'populism flourishes on the tension between the two' (Canovan 1999: 7). Redemptive democracy is accommodative in the sense that on the one hand it has enough space for populist rhetoric to be inclusive, while on the other it sustains rationalist utopias – about the kind of future society it envisages. In contrast the pragmatic face of democracy is hospitable to slogans and ballots, but not bullets. It allows freedom to make loud demands and slogans but is averse to roaring sounds of canons and gun-shots. Redemptive aspect of democracy is thus founded on faith and hope while the pragmatic politics is inherently suspicious of other stakeholders, involving contested terrains and inescapable conflict. It is this gap between the two faces of democracy that is fertile breeding ground for populist movements' (*Ibid*: 10-11). Democratic system has therefore two contradictory pressures and also conflicting demands of interest groups or classes. This is doubly true of countries that suffer from late development of capitalism, during their post-colonial nation-building process. This late development experience gives rise to 'revolution of rising expectations' of the people (Laclau 1979: 151-52). Populism as an ideology thus exploits this gap between promise and performance in such a democratic structure of governance. However, if a populist movement, with strong organisational base succeeds in capturing power, which it seldom does, then its own inability to fulfil promises and to live up to the people's expectations gets exposed , and that in turn can give rise to new populist formations and ideological articulations (Canovan 1999: 12-13). Thus a populist movement can reproduce yet another brand of populism.

Possibilities of Theorising Populism

In an important contribution to the discourse on populism Mouzelis (1988) has referred to three approaches to the theory of populism. First is totally negative because according to him 'populism refers to such a wide variety of ideologies and movements that it is almost impossible to find any common features that would justify its usage as a scientific concept. The second approach favours its limited use to refer to protest movements and ideologies that focus on the problems of the peasantry i.e. rural cultivators. However, there also have been attempts to view 'populist movements as

urban based movements of the type witnessed in Latin America. The third approach is inclusive as it attempts to accommodate the majority of movements that are generally labelled as 'populist' (Mouzelis 1988: 329). This third approach takes clue from Ernesto Laclau who has argued that class cleavages and contradictions often give rise to class "interpellations" [i.e. ideologies that call on or interpellate people as a class subjects]. Hence, at political level there is an objective divide between the people and the 'power block". The dominant classes attempt to use institutions to their advantage and restructure the power block but exclude and subordinate the people. Populist movements are thus a reaction to this power block, and hence they are anti-elitism. Populist movements therefore attempt to articulate their themes that are quite antagonistic to the ruling establishment (Laclau 1979: 155-76).

Broadly agreeing with Laclau, Mouzelis has observed that analysis of populist movements ought not to restrict themselves to their ideology alone. An analyst has to take into account the organisational structures of such movements at the same time, especially the type of leadership, authority, relationship between leaders, cadres and followers as these are closely linked to the way goals and ideology of movements are articulated. Mouzelis has also further observed that populist movements constitute major and persistent feature of the 'Third World' politics where late development effect i.e. late industrialising economies compel parliamentary democracies to broaden political participation of masses (Mouzelis 1985: 330-32). In such a social setting there are two ways in which lower class citizens and organisations get incorporated in parliamentary politics; first by way clientilism – i.e. through patronage network whether in an oligarchic, semi-feudal traditional form or in bureaucratic forms of a modern state. For instance, the way the Congress Party in Maharashtra has built networks of institutions – such as cooperative sugar factories, cooperative banks, primary Cooperative Credit Societies, Marketing societies, cooperative milk producing societies – is perhaps the best example of such "clientilism". It means creating and sustaining an institutional network through patronage, often at the cost of the state; clientilist method creates or inculcates a sense of dependency - heightened by obligation - on the one hand and ensures allegiance to party / organisational leaders and high command on the other. The other mode of political inclusion of the lower classes in peripheral and semi-peripheral capitalist countries, like India, is populism - as an ideological articulation or as a populist movement. Through populist movements an abrupt entry of masses into politics is attempted especially when these movements have strong grass-roots level organisation with well nursed network of cadres owing allegiance to the personality of leader. In contrast to the approach of Laclau and Canovan, who have focused more on ideological elements of populist movement and involvement of people as class –subjects, Mouzelis considers organisational; level and authority structure as more decisive in populist phenomenon (*Ibid*: 334-41).

There is, of course, a group of scholars who view populist movements and populist ideology in a totally negative light and treat them as anti-democratic. Because to them these movements appeal to 'people', they favour direct democracy and a kind of convulsion on to mass democracy – that implies direct participation unmediated by representative institutions of democracy. Taguieff (1993: 9–10), for instance, understands populism as a pathological forma pseudo as well as post-democratic phenomenon produced by the corrupt practices that typify democracy. He has hinted at the "polymorphic danger" of populism becoming stronger the more intellectuals criticise it. Using the French experience Taguieff even talks of 'national populism' that he characterised as an authoritarian ideal type representing what he calls 'identitarian' pole of populism which is contra-posed to protest populism; it is always against something – anti-elitism, anti-intellectualism, anti-representative democracy – and yet seen as a positive grass-roots demand for direct democracy. This negative depiction of populism by Taguieff goes to the extent of treating 'national populism' as a misnomer because he viewed it as the last ditch effort to relegitimise authoritarian nationalism with democratic means[16]. Hence, it is often described as 'undemocratic' - a 'danger to democracy'. However, in the context of the farmers' movement in Maharashtra, that is our central theme, we find that its leader –Sharad Joshi who was initially critical of politicians for corrupting the entire gamut of democratic institutions, and yet he still believed that democracy continues to be the best available system of governance (Joshi 2010: 138-39). Sharad Joshi strongly holds the view that, in democracy the evolution of political institutions has reached a dead-end and no better or stronger system is going to emerge hereafter. According to Taguieff this kind of ambivalence towards democratic institutions is characteristic of a populist movement or populist discourse as, (Taguieff 1993:22-23), it reflects some kind of paradoxical features. Hence, it is neither an analytical tool nor an adequate descriptive model because at times populism projects conflicting attributes also. Wetfort even treats it as a politically unstable form of transition, an attempt to modernise, draws new social groups of people in to the political sphere and processes, and mobilise them for political action through demagoguery of its leaders who are keen to control the growing masses for their own political power ambition[17]

An equally strong negative projection of populism as an ideology and populist movements, especially in the Indian context, has been made by Tom Brass. In his extensive critical review of the discourse on populism Brass (2000) has first reasserts the value of a standard, classical, orthodox and somewhat procrustean Marxism, especially Marxist classical analysis of the peasantry (a la Eighteenth Brummier of Louis Bonaparte). He tends to be dismissive about populism, neo-populism, 'subaltern historiography, new social movements as post-modernist articulations as alternative approaches because: (a) their explanatory schema are directed towards rejecting the value of Marxism; (b) that they take an essentialist view of peasantry; (c) that they

are all quintessentially conservative and at times even reactionary in their ideological outlook; and (d) that populist articulations embedded in all of these ideological discourses do not question the appropriating essence of capitalism. To Brass these perspectives stress complexity, uniqueness, and even autonomy of culture, ethnicity, national interests, and ideologies independent of their base in economic interests and structures of production relations. Brass further argues that the same populist discourse has structured the 'new farmers' movement (in India) as it did the environmental and women's movement in the 1980s. These movements tend to either side-track or banish 'capitalism' as a problem and as a stumbling obstacle in the emancipatory project. In so far as the populism of the farmers' movement is concerned, it harps on the *agrarian myth* without seriously addressing to the *agrarian question*. Thus, populism of the Indian farmers' movement has a tendency to bask in the nostalgia of peasant tradition, in the imageries of 'return to the rural romanticised hinterland', and to valorise Russian neo-populist A.V. Chayanov and his glorification of the middle peasant as the anchor of the agrarian society. This agrarian populist discourse that provides ideological foundation to the new farmers' movement, including the one in Maharashtra, romanticises the 'organicism of rural life' and treats it as historically enduring (Brass 2000: 3-10). In the view of Brass by rejecting socialism and also bypassing capitalism, the populist ideology posits itself as a political 'third way' discourse, and therefore he has dismissed it as a viable transformative alternative either theoretically or ideologically.

The blanket criticism of populist movements and populism as an ideology, as Tom Brass does in the context of the farmers' movement in Maharashtra, as a 'discourse about culture, involves critique of industrialisation, urbanisation, and modernity based on nostalgia for a vanishing way of life' (*Ibid*: 11). In our opinion his dismissive treatment of populism is based on a complete misreading of ground level realities of the mobilisation by the Shetkari Sanghatana movement. The movement's mobilisation of farmers has all along been focussed on cost-based agricultural prices so that farmers (not peasants of the Chayanovian imagery!) could compete in domestic as well as in the international market. This would ensure that capital formation and accumulation could take place in rural areas, and modernity – both in terms of adoption of new farm technology and new lifestyle as well as profit orientation towards farming, could take roots in the countryside. It would usher in rural industries and modern amenities into the life of the farmers who have been purposely deprived of fair prices of farm produce. The leaders of the farmers' movement argue that the deliberate policy of the state to keep prices of farm produce low has been largely responsible for the fact that most farmers in India are languishing in poverty, indebtedness and destitution. Throughout his virulent criticism of populism as an ideology and populist movement Brass has used the concept of 'peasant, avoiding the term 'farmer' perhaps with a view to targeting Chayanovian peasant rural

nostalgia and assuming that Shetkari Sanghatana (for that matter the farmers' movement in India) is proposing nothing new except reiterating the same Chayanov's romanticism. Anyone who has had first-hand acquaintance with facts about the farmers' movement in Maharashtra would confirm, without any shadow of doubt, that the movement's leader – Sharad Joshi - constantly appealed to reason and rational thinking and not attempted to arouse emotions. Sharad Joshi made illiterate farmers understand the micro and macro - economics and political economy of farming and prices of farm produce in the theoretical framework of 'terms of trade' between industry and agriculture as delineated by Rosa Luxemburg.

Therefore the attempt of Tom Brass to apply the nineteenth century model of European peasantry to the post-Green Revolution - market oriented Indian farmer is completely misplaced and erroneous. Perhaps he consciously applies the Chayanovian stereotype to the Indian farmer of the 1980s and 1990s because of his commitment not only theoretical but also ideological orthodox Marxism. Brass also refers to the 'political role of populism is primarily limited to publicising the grass-roots level farmers on the basis of non-class forms of consciousness (*Ibid*: 15, also Chapter 3). However, Brass fails to capture the ability of populist ideological discourse to help the class ridden agrarian hierarchy to transcend their class situations and interests at certain historical junctures. Similarly he has also overlooked the manner in which a dominant class of rich farmers can establish its hegemony (in the sense Antonio Gramsci has used this concept) in a movement that also succeeds in a specific historical development in bringing the rich, the middle, the poor and marginalised farmers on a single platform through a populist discourse and prepare them for a collective action. Similarly the logic of Brass in clubbing together new farmers' movement and its "Bharat vs. India" populist ideology, with the populism of ecofeminism, environmentalism, nationalism of Mahatma Gandhi's anti-colonial movement, the populism of the Bharatiya Janata Party's *Hindutva* ideology, and populist articulation in reviving popular culture (and thereby glorifying the folk tradition or the rural social order) – all under one umbrella (Brass: 98-123) is far from convincing; it sound almost as a biased critique, an *apriori* assessment of populist ideology and populist movements without probing their historical specificities or contexts.

Despite such a negative characterisation by some scholars – like Taguieff and Tom Brass, populist movements have become a part of everyday life especially in India and therefore, this phenomenon cannot be written off as a potential area of sociological enquiry. Rather it needs to be understood, explained and documented properly, if possible to arrive at certain broad generalisations as a step towards its theorisation. Notwithstanding attempts to paint populism as an ideological demagogy, it depends on how the concept is used in everyday political discourse, how populist mass comprehends the leader, and how the leader in turn uses idioms or metaphors to communicate

with the masses. Leader's attempt to convince them about the righteousness of ideology as well as the justness of movement's demands is essential to get at the secret of success of mobilisation, and to know how the politically excluded and marginalised farmers respond to appeals and get ready for effective collective action for nearly three decades. In fact some scholars argue that a kind of ambiguity is inherent in the very Latin word '*populus*' that oscillates between two meanings: (i) the whole of the residents of a constituted state, or of a city (i.e. people as a whole), and (ii) the whole of the non-Noble citizens and the multitude of *populous*. The latter meaning implies that the entire citizenry is not homogenous and is divided between the Nobility – i.e. the elites, the aristocracy and the rich gentry, and the non-Noble multitude of excluded and marginalised citizens alienated from the power structure as also from the development measures of the welfare state (*Ibid*: 83).

Quite contrary to Brass's and Taguieff's negative depiction and de-legitimisation of populism, Piccone and Ulman (1995) have considered it necessary to rethink the phenomena of populist ideology and movements as alternative discourse that its critics tend to dismiss prematurely. According to those like them, who take positive view of populism, after the end of the Cold War and the disintegration of U.S.S.R. the same old relations of domination (i.e. meaning U.S. militarisation and Americanisation) can no longer be maintained by merely extending the 'one dimensional modernity'. In post-modern context populist forms of protest politics cannot be discredited altogether. There is a need to rescue the social reality of 'populism' from the stereotypes that are still in vogue in most American universities- especially in the global capitalist economies - that generously finance these universities. Such institutions in the elitist settings are, and have always been, hostile and indifferent, at times even patronising, towards anything that has to do with ordinary common people – their outlook and aspirations. It is therefore equally important to examine the emancipatory potential of populism as an ideology and of populist mobilisations in the new post-modern historical context (Piccone *et al.* 1995: 5-6). Now it is evident that the American strategy of reconstituting control mechanisms through decentralisation and federalisation has also shown signs of debacle, and that the mega-state (i.e. the unipolar capitalist world system headed by U.S.A.) has already headed towards fiscal and axiological crisis. Therefore in the context of global slow-down that has adversely affected the U.S. economy the most, that it is perhaps the right time to rethink the prematurely dismissed populist alternatives. It is, therefore, time that explanatory potential of populism is explored again in the context of contemporary social movements- especially the farmers' movement in Maharashtra.

Purpose of the fresh perspective offered by Piccone and Ulam is obvious. The "ideal-type" construct of populism oftenend up in a negative characterisation that highlights its 'anti-elitism', 'anti-intellectualism' and anti-

democracy. Such a description implies that populism targets at direct appeal to people – which is nothing but a kind of protest-populism. However, this would preclude possibility of seeing populism as essentially a grass-roots movement, as a positive demand for change in favour of 'direct participatory democracy' (Piccone *et al*. 1995: 6-7). It aims at shifting the structure of governance from a highly centralised to a system of decentralised local level decision-making. Therefore, it has to be acknowledged that, with whatever inadequacies, historically speaking populism - at ideological or at organisational level - has remained close to the ground realities, focussed on immediate needs and predicated on relatively simple ideas that are vital to the lives of the common people and their needs. It may be admitted that populist articulations in ideological discourse appears theoretically quite unsophisticated and also down-right anti-intellectual. However, as in the case of the theoretical aspects of economism of the farmers' movement in Maharashtra from the 1980s onwards, such articulations measured up to standards of any rationalist theorist of political economy. In a modernist context that is obsessed with centralisation, bigness of corporate organisations and their expertise, the populist assertions about local autonomy, freedom from all forms of restrictions, and human dimensions of development matched by practical reason could not possibly avoid appearing ambivalent, transitional and at times even paradoxical.

Collective mobilisation, achieved through the force of ideology, of course, involves targeting a common set of demands and an appealing agenda for the mass of people. It means that it has to sum up the most crucial or dominant aspects of the agrarian crisis[18] in language an idioms comprehensible to mass of farmers. Also such a populist collective mobilisation must identify targets, essence of the perceived evil, and finally define what is possible and how it is to be achieved. It is necessary to recognise that 'a successful ideological mobilisation eventually gets manifested in practices of political mobilisation' (Therborn 1982: 116-17). Such an ideological mobilisation is not necessarily fixed on a class –based political-democratic interpellations alone. Success of such ideological interpellation would depend largely on the capacity of the leader to tap, harness and appropriately articulate the existential dimensions of the masses. We believe that Sharad Joshi – the leader of Shetkari Sanghatana has had this ability to identify what the masses of farmers wanted desperately in the post-Green revolution phases in India, what they needed badly, and above all what kind of mobilisation they would respond to and will be effective. In a populist ideological mobilisation there has to be a blend, as also condensation, of multiple ideological discourses into a single major threat usually expressed in a simple, but hugely appealing, slogan. In the case of the farmers' movement in Maharashtra the rapidity with which ideological mobilisation succeeded in the 1980s and 1990s, has been of great significance. Although it was threatening to reorient the political regime in India, compelling it to come to terms with the populist discourse and demands, its leader was

not inclined to transgress the boundaries of democratic politics though the movement's leader – Sharad Joshi in Maharashtra - was unsparingly critical of democratically elected politicians. Such an ideologically driven mass mobilisation, as it gathered momentum in Maharashtra, can be possible under two conditions: (i) it can take place on the basis of the past tradition or culture, which may be a revivalist and at times some kind of right-wing reactionary, not radical, mobilisation, and (ii) it can take place on the basis of existential appeal – which can be called 'mobilisation by example' (*Ibid*: 121-23). Finally, such a populist movement can also offer a futuristic world-view – suggesting a set of goals of establishing a just society – a free society, and also offering a utopian world-view. In our view these features were combined in Sharad Joshi's ideological articulation and the goals of his mass mobilisation. Our attempt will be to explain how and why the populist ideology succeeded in famers' mobilisation on a phenomenal scale.

More recently conceptual framework of Populism and populist movement has been used by N Subramanian (2011) in his study of the Dravidian movement in South India as a case of populist mobilisation that focusses attention on the manner in which ethnic identity is used for a populist discourse in democratic politics. He uses the term populism as an all-encompassing concept to characterise movements, political parties, regimes and ideologies. Those articulate notions of a 'people' defined by special norms were rooted in its history. Subramanian prefers the term 'popular community' instead of the term 'people'. He has distinguished it from the privileged elites considered dominant in these spheres and taken to embody alternative cultural tradition. According to him, the people and the elites are said to have distinct norms, mores and ethnic categories that are particularly suitable for the definition of 'popular community' as indicators of class, status and social marginality. Populist ideologues have distinguished the 'people' from the 'elites' with reference to pigmentation, language and dialect use, types of occupation, education, patterns of worship and dietary habits also.

The way Subramanian approaches and defines populism suits more for ethnically homogenous groups, and communities that interest researchers in ethnography. However, in studying farmers' mobilisation, looking into norms, cultural practices, religious beliefs and dietary habits of people will be of no consequence. Leaders of farmers' movements in India instead argue that notwithstanding internal differences of cultural practices, dialects or diet, what binds the farmers is their existential conditions resulting from the denial of remunerative prices to their farm produce. What is relevant for our purpose here in Subramanian's assertionis that the concept of populism is analytically useful if only applied to cases in which distinction between the mass of people and 'elite'significantly shapes mobilising strategy, mass response to appeal, to a given social composition of the support, the structure of movement – its organisation and policies it promises to adopt (*Ibid.*: 8-9). According to him

such movements appeal directly to people and inspire them to demand direct participation in formal democratic politics. He recognises the fact that when populist formation succeeds in capturing power, such a regime has to face pressure to perform and fulfil promises to increase entitlements. This is the only way they can retain support. Above all populist ideological articulation cuts across socialism, liberal, nationalists, fascists etc.

More importantly, Subramanian has distinguished populist clientilism from bureaucratic clientilism in the kinds of policies adopted, the reach of the clientilist networks for disbursement of patronage and the claims with reference to which policies are legitimised so that their benefits become quickly available to the needy masses that support such movements. Moreover populist clientilism channels patronage through its own organisational networks directly to plebeian groups as compared to bureaucratic clientilism that is more often parasitic on traditional clientilist linkages for patronage distribution (*Ibid*: 69-70). He finally argues that in the case of the populism of the Dravidian movement it has more often tended to curb economic growth and also to place limits on people's autonomy and agenda. Being ideologically eclectic,populist egalitarian and its collectivist features evoke only images of the marginalised people rather than motivate participants of a movement to undertake any radical agenda such as property redistribution and the like (*Ibid*: 73-74). Furthermore Subramanian has distinguished two features of populism – viz. assertive populism and paternalistic populism based on the type of appeal, organisational structure, social bases, supporters' attitudes, and policies they promote and pursue. Paternalistic populism promises that a benevolent state, leader, or a party will enforce community norms to ensure that the poor and the powerless are provided subsidised wage goods and protection. In contrast with assertive populism, paternalistic populism encourages supporters to assume an attitude of reverence and gratitude towards the mass leader, party or the state – each of them seen as a traditional patron writ large. Credit for benefits accrued to common people is given to the leader's good will rather than the activities of the cadres. Therefore, the person's entitlement to benefits does not tend to derive from his position in the movement's sub-culture or in its organisational structure. The paternalist brand of populism is more compatible with patrimonialism (*Ibid*: 75-76). It is intolerant towards independent initiative and shows greater tendency to control independent associations than assertive populism does.

Finally, populist ideology and methods of mobilisation, Subramanian argues, interact with the matrix of contention to produce variations in partisanship and in the social meaning attached to mobilising party or organisation (*Ibid*: 188). It would be interesting to see which of these features and types of populism have figured prominently in the mobilisation of farmers in Maharashtra under the leadership of Sharad Joshi and the Shetkari Sanghatana. Using the conceptual and theoretical framework of populism as

an ideology and populist movements, we can raise certain research questions as follows:

Research Questions

(i)   How do we understand a populist movement and what are its key defining features in the India setting?

(ii)   Under what historical conditions, and at what stage of development, such a populist ideological articulation does/can succeed in mobilising farmers?

(iii)   What is the precise relationship between a leadership and the movement's followers and activists? Is it similar to the relationship between 'elites' and 'masses', or between a charismatic leader and his/her believers? And what kind of leadership is conducive for building an organisation or for institutionalising the movement?

(iv)   Do the demands of a movement reflect any specific class interests, and if so do those class interests in turn shape its populist ideology? If a particular agrarian class is dominant in a farmers movement and yet succeeds in forming a coalition in the mobilisation, what is the nature of the class 'hegemony' (in the sense Antonio Gramsci (1976: 55-68; also 106-08) considered it as a necessary condition for the dominant class to sustain its power and how is it achieved by the dominant class?

(v)   Why a populist movement that mobilises masses of farmers on a massive scale fails to garner electoral support in democratic politics?And

(vi)   Alternatively, even when it gains some electoral success and a space in power structure through elected representatives, why are they unable to sustain their power and fulfil promises made to the masses that supported the movement?

Within this adopted analytical framework we hope to answer these questions eventually.

NOTES

1.   Devendra Gawande, a young journalist has extensively toured the interiors of Gadchiroli district in Maharashtra, where Naxalites have their stronghold. He has reported in his recent book that poor tribal people are pressurised by the Naxalites using their intimidating ham-handed tactics. If they resist their pressure they are shot dead (Gawande 2011).

2.   Acquisition of surplus land under the land ceiling legislations is considered to be the poorest in U.P. and Bihar (See Malaviya 1955).

3.   For the details of the Telangana movement 1946-51 see Dhanagare (1983).

4.   Vasant Nargolkar, biographer of Vinoba Bhave and author of a book on the Bhoodan movement has given details of the way such committees functioned (Nargolkar 1963: 167-256).

5.   It is another story that beneficiary tenants had to pay between 10 to 20 times of the annual rents they paid as compensation to the landowners whose lands had been transferred in the names of their erstwhile tenants. The only exception to this was the abolition of landlordism in Jammu and Kashmir where the then Sheikh Abdullah's government did not make any provision for payment of compensation to the landlords.

6.   For detailed sociological analysis of the CDP and also for the report of the Balawantrai Mehta Committee See A.R. Desai, 1969:611-21 and also Dube (1969: 622-626).

7. Chaudhury Charan Singh was the most prominent Jat leader who played an active role in the pre-Independence U.P. politics, and held important offices in the provincial government. Though loyal to the then ruling Congress Party till mid -1960s, political ambitions drove Charan Singh to break away from the party and formed his own political outfit called BharatiyaLok Dal and became the Chief Minister of U.P. when the disintegration of the Congress Party actually began. For an excellently documented historical account of the politics of Charan Singh see Paul Brass (2012: 352-72).

8. Gail Omvedt has claimed that in her study of new social movement – such as the Dalit movement, the new women's movement, and also the anti-dam movement in Maharashtra she has used 'participant observation method besides collective published documents and other related material and interviews with leaders and activists of these movements (See Omvedt, 1993: xi –xvii).

9. The theory resource mobilisation reminds us of similar framework or approach used for understanding crime and juvenile delinquency by criminologists and sociologists of deviance.

10. Drawing heavily on the young Hegelian Marx, here Althusser has argued that going beyond just the terms like 'infra-structure' (base) and 'super-structure', the internal relations of the basic elements of the structure,(that includes even 'religion, politics, ideologies and so on) must become part of our analysis of contradictions and also in the historical context of space and time. Such an analysis would reveal the nuances of differences between 'dominance' and 'determination' (see Althusser 2005:21-39; also 89-116).

11. The term 'hegemony'has been used in the sense Antonio Gramsci has used to imply 'dominance with consent' (Gramsci, 1976: 55-57) though Gramsci has occasionally used it interchangeably with 'leadership'. This important distinction between 'dominance with' and 'dominance without hegemony' has been taken here from Ranajit Guha (1998: 19-20, 22-23) although this distinction has been applied by Guha to refer tothe misuse of the term by colonial historiography that assumed 'consent without coercion' in his critique of the power structure and relations and their historical manifestations in colonial India.

12. The rich farmers, called bagaitdars - in Maharashtra turned to cash crops in the hope of making profit; but over 75 per cent of landholders who controlled less than 35 per cent of land owned belonged to the middle, small and marginal strata in 1981. However, according to 1991-Agricultural Census in Maharashtra over 86 per cent of the operational holdings had control of over 55 per cent of the operated cultivated area. They were marginal, small and semi-medium farmers (See Dhanagare 1994: 75-78).

13. It was the demand for 'equal but separate policy. It implied that although as citizens both the Whites and the Blacks have equalled political rights the two communities must have separate segregated residences, schools, restaurants etc.

14. However the class of rich peasants – Kulaks had gradually emerged in Russia's rural areas by 1870s.

15. The distinction between 'Bharat' and 'India' that he popularly made in his rhetoric was isomorphic with the 'farm' and the 'industrial' sectors respectively). Therefore, the case of the leader of the farmers' movement in Maharashtra would appear to be a deviation from the feature or attribute of populism as 'anti-theoretical' and anti-intellectual'.

16. Obviously in this context Taguieff is interpreting 'populism' through the French glasses referring to what happened during the Charles de Gaul's' regime (See Piccone and Ulman 1995: 6-7).

17. Wetfort's views are taken here as they are cited from his original French text by Taguieff (1993).

18.   For example the agrarian crisis – with declining rate of growth in the farm sector, declining profitability of agriculture, rural indebtedness and farmers' suicides on a phenomenal scale since the mid-1990s – in the Indian context is noteworthy.

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