



Types of Peasants

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Abstract:- *Peasants constitute a segment of the larger society in India. These peasants are seen as part of society and part of culture. In the Indian reference, this term peasant culture is full of complexities because of general notion of this term with certain caste clusters. We can take account the comparability of relative positions of agrarian classes in different regional structure and broadly identify the divisions.*”

Keywords:- Peasants, Land, Family, Labour

Peasants in the social science defined on two major themes, first, they represent a particular stage in the history of mankind and secondly, peasants constitute a segment of the larger society or whole. Peasants are seen as part of society and part of culture. There have been different perspective from which such co-existence has been watched. According to Karl Marx view peasantry is essentially as suppressed and exploited segment of pre-capitalist society. Other traditions take cultural aspect as something crucial and view peasants as representative of earlier national tradition. The analytical category of peasant includes widely differing hierarchies in different historical periods within its definitional fold. In the Indian reference, this term peasant culture is full of complexities because of general notion of this term with certain caste clusters. Although, if we follow the two major assumptions of the peasant the Chayanovian and the Marxist, the use of family labour emerges as one of the crucial indices to the definition of a peasant at least in pre-capitalist societies.

In Haryana particularly in both colonial and post-colonial period as the majority agriculturists have always used and continue to use family labour on land. This is notwithstanding the sharpening of socio- economic polarities in the wake of the green revolution and a certain noticeable erosion in the use of family labour accompanying the resultant prosperity among some peasant groups.

There are two criteria to define the peasants first, the mode of livelihood and secondly, the relation of peasant with larger social structure. In A.V. Chayanov's point of view peasants are defined mainly in term of the way the family farm workers. The house hold from, as the unit of production and consumption. R. Firth, defined the peasant exclusively in terms of the mode of the livelihood characteristic. Characteristics to only those who are dependent on the cultivation of land. This way the peasants become small scale producers using simple technology and equipment and often relying primarily for their subsistence on what they themselves produce. The primary means of livelihood of the peasant is the cultivation of land . E. Wolf, further submits peasants are agricultural producers, retain effective control over land and peasants sole objective is subsistence not at profit with reinvestment motive. Apart from this there are other social scientists who defined there exclusively in terms of their relation with larger society G.M. Foster defined peasants as communities which historically speaking have grown up in an associated spatio-temporal relationship with more complex components of their greater society . In Indian context, the



proprietary or occupancy rights as T. Shahnin stated that ownership could lie with the state, community, individual or family. Dependent peasant cultivation such as tenant and sharecroppers, who can be evicted at the will of landlords are therefore brought within the preview of the definition of peasant. Quite important is the criteria of small producers to whom the peasant is generally restricted. Small producers may be defined as those with a component of single equipment and produce mainly for subsistence. The existing definition lays considerable stress on production for subsistence. This is in fact the central theme to E. Wolf R. Firth and R. Redfield's definition. Now, in a concrete empirical situation marketing of a part of the produce can't be altogether ruled out even though production is primarily for subsistence. This shows market comes into picture and the state power and the existence of surplus to some extent which is usurped by the state authorities or put at the market for disposal. The use of family labour as an important component of definition has been underscored in most of the definitions. This means that the family and economic activities on the farm are closely interwoven. It is the family which supplies labour and it is the farm which meets the consumption, need of the whole family. Thus, now we may define peasants as small produces who produce mainly for their own consumption through cultivation of land to which they are attached in some way by the use mainly of family labour and hold inferior status in a town centred economy and society. Major components of peasants, a. peasants are small producers who use simple equipment. b. they primarily produce for their own consumption. In saying so, the marginal production for market in order to pay tax to the state or buy the essential commodities of life is not ruled out yet they are essentially different from those who produce primarily for the market, making capital investments and realizing profits (c) they derive their livelihood primarily from land which doesn't preclude the possibility of them contributing to their family income through other part time or seasonal works (d) they confine labour needed to cultivate the land largely to the members of family (e) they are attached to land in some way (f) they enjoy inferior economic, political, social and cultural status in view of the domination by the towns centred economy. Thus the production of surplus appropriated by outsider with the broad frame work of family based subsistence farming. All peasants are not equal and every peasant community indicates definitely complex structures of internal neighborhood exploitation often located within the network of patron-client relationship. Yet most of inter-peasant inequality and exploitation are secondary to the one external to peasants both in terms of share extracted and in the way structural dynamics of class structure bear upon them. The concept of class has been used in Marxian framework to simply objective economic conditions or unity of economic interests only. It does not suggest that those who occupied in the same class position were necessarily aware of political consciousness of their collective class interest. To be precise the use of term class implies Karl Marx's class in itself rather than his notion of class for itself. The agrarian social structure in India varies from region to region. Daniel Thorner has attempted to reduce these classes into a well defined and precise social categories on the basis of the three following criteria : 1 Type of income obtained from the soil : a rent b fruits of own cultivation c. Wages 2. The nature of rights a. proprietary or ownership b. tenancy (with varying degree of tenurial security) c. sharecropping rights,. d. no rights at all. 3. The extent of field work actually performed. : a. absentee, who doesn't work to all. B, those who perform partial work c. total work done by actual cultivator with family labour d. where work is done entirely for

others to earn wages . Taking these criteria Thorner has outlined the following of agrarian class structure in India :

Maliks : whose income is derived primarily from property rights in the soil and whose common interest is to keep the level of rents up while keeping the wage level down. They collect rent from tenants, sub-tenants and sharecropper.

- a. Biglandlords : holding rights over large tracts extending over several villages; they are absentee owners/renters with absolutely no interest in land management or improvement.
 - b. Richlandowners : Proprietors with considerable holdings but usually in the same village and although performing no field work, supervising cultivation and taking personal interest in the management and also in the improvement of land if necessary.
 - ii. Kisans : working peasants having property interest in the land but actual rights whether legal or customary inferior to those of the maliks.
 - a. Small landowners : having holding sufficient to support a family who cultivate land with family labour and who either don't employ outside labour (except harvest) or receive rent.
 - b. Substantial tenants : tenants holding leases under either Ia or Ib (Big landlords or rich landowners.)
- III Mazdoors, those earning their livelihood primarily from working on other lands.
- a. Poor tenants, having tenancy rights but less secure holdings too small to suffice for a family's maintenance and income derived from land often less than that earned by wage labour.
 - b. Sharecroppers, either tenants-at-will leases without security; cultivating land for others on share-cropper basis and having least agricultural implements.
 - c. Landless Labourers : Daniel Thorner's categorization was based on the relations of production or are in relation to the means of production. The sub-categories of this model are nearer to the realities of the Indian agrarian structure. Since he couldn't relate the specificity of the internal differentiations within Indian agrarian society so readjust or regroup these sub-categories more comprehensive structural model can be seen from the works of Lenin and Mao, those relating to analysis of agrarian classes in the Russian and Chinese societies respectively.
 - I. Landlords : Thorner's Ia, the biglandlords
 - II. Richpeasants : IIa i.e. Thorner's Ib Rich landowners proprietors with considerable holding performing no field work but taking interest in management or improvement of land.
 - III.
 - b. Rich tenants who have substantial holdings, enjoy secured /occupancy rights and have to pay a nominal rent to their landlords. (Thorner didn't mention)

Middle peasants III a landowners of medium size (self sufficient) holdings (Thorner's IIa)

III b Tenants who have substantial holding but have to pay higher rent than those paid by IIb.

IV Poor peasants : IV a Landowners with holdings that are not sufficient to maintain a family and therefore forced to rent other's land (Thorner didn't account for this)

IV b Tenants with small holdings but with some tenurial security IVC Tenants at will or share croppers.

V. Landless Labourers : Thorner IIIC.

Fragmentation and sub-division of land is directly proportional to the rise of agricultural labourers. The condition of poor peasants owners who still own their lands or sub-tenants is such that no appreciable difference is depicted. We find it difficult to draw a clear time between cultivators by sharecroppers and rental peasants. Particularly in district Bhiwani of Haryana state. In a common sharing system on an average the landlord gets 50% of the yield and rent is normally four thousand to ten thousand or an average of seven thousand. The tenants commonly goes on from year to year eking out a precarious living (cultivating with his own stock and implements, indebtedness odd climatic natural disastrous etc.) In practice, there is no clear line between the two. The class of agricultural proletariat combined with poor peasant (tenants share croppers or even peasant owners) agricultural labourers) formed the large agricultural population. Only a tiny fraction amount these categories is observed. All the above classification first, is regionally specific Secondly, more often rich middle and poor peasant categories can be distinguished form each other only in qualitative rather than in quantitative terms. Further, classification like Biglandlords, Rich landowners, middle peasants, susstantial and small peasants itc often used to differentiate between landholdings, which is not objective method of evaluation of these categories. There is considerable overlapping in some areas. Hence no satisfactory way of resolving at macro level analysis. Hence there is no universal classification of peasants which suits all regions and situations partly because of regional variations and partly because of lack of uniform data and statistics of different areas in different periods. We can take account the comparability of relative positions of agrarian classes in different regional structure and broadly identify the divisions. Again, while considering particular area situation, we should also take into account of irrigational facilities, crop pattern, water level, fertility of soil and in last but not the least the level of consciousness of the peasantry. An analyst can relate specific strata of a regional agrarian hierarchy to the general class categories of various models mentioned earlier.

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