

This work explores the trends and perspectives of land reforms in India on the basis of a comprehensive survey of Indian agrarian studies. It is marked by boldness and originality of approach and freshness of analytical treatment. For the first time in India the question of a scientific methodology is explored for an integrated treatment of the economic and socio-political dimensions of land reforms.

A major contribution of this work is in terms of ideas relating to the construction of a typology of agrarian sub-systems in India. Agrarian system is treated both as an independent and as a dependent variable. New insights are also provided on the question of constraints and possibilities of the political system for agrarian change. The book thus provides illumination on the common as well as unique features of India's agrarian reconstruction. A research programme for land reforms is then presented in the light of a new approach to the problem of land reforms.

LAND REFORMS IN INDIA  
TRENDS AND PERSPECTIVES



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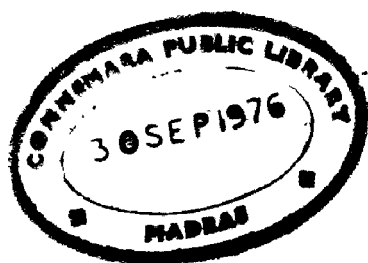


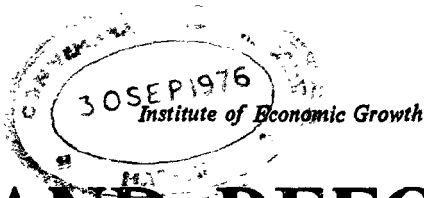
LAND REFORMS IN INDIA

Trends and Perspectives



INSTITUTE OF ECONOMIC GROWTH, DELHI





# LAND REFORMS IN INDIA

Trends and Perspectives

P. C. JOSHI



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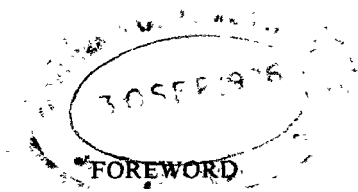
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Progress in the field of agriculture in the course of the past 20 years has been significant, but not quite satisfactory. It has been increasingly realised that growth of production in this sector continues to be handicapped by difficulties in enforcing the requisite land reforms. This field of land reform merits all research efforts that can be undertaken as an aid to effecting the necessary institutional changes in agriculture.

The Institute of Economic Growth has been concerned with the problems faced in this field and has from the beginning taken the theme of land reforms as one of its major concerns. Dr. P.C. Joshi at the Institute has developed research programmes in this field. These programmes are comprehensive and oriented to policy formulation. Therefore when the Indian Council of Social Science Research approached Dr. Joshi to prepare a trend report on land reforms in India, the Institute readily accepted this proposal in view of his inter-disciplinary background of economics and sociology and his deep interest in the land problems. Dr. Joshi has tried to make his report as comprehensive as possible. It is a matter of satisfaction to us that this work has developed into a full-length book.

Dr. Joshi has interpreted evaluation of land reforms very broadly so as to include in it evaluation of changes in the agrarian social structure and of their impact on social and economic change. He has attempted an exhaustive and critical review of work done in this broad field by economists and by scholars belonging to other disciplines such as sociology and social anthropology. Such a review should help in promoting among scholars a greater understanding of the many-sided problems of research in the field of land reforms. It should also help in promoting among the policy-makers and the citizens greater appreciation and awareness of the complex issues of reconstructing the agrarian system in India.

**P.B. DESAI**  
*Director*

Institute of Economic Growth  
Delhi  
March 1975



## PREFACE

A survey of research on land reforms in India can be prepared in several ways depending on the objective of the survey. The present survey forms part of the Research Survey Programme sponsored by the Indian Council of Social Science Research. A review of trends and perspectives and an identification of unexplored problem areas in specific fields within each discipline were the broad objectives of these research surveys. Each scholar was, however, given freedom to determine the scope of research survey in the field allotted to him. While conforming to the main objectives of the ICSSR programme, the scope of this research survey has been broadened in the following respects.

In the first place, this survey explores not only the development of scientific knowledge in the field of land reforms in India, it also explores how this knowledge has been ideologically conditioned. This survey has thus evolved also into an essay in sociology of knowledge and in the methodology of agrarian research.

Second, even though the subject of land reforms was treated as a branch of agricultural economics in the scheme prepared by the ICSSR, it has been treated here as one of those fundamental problems which require an interdisciplinary treatment. In his *History of Economic Analysis*, Schumpeter indicates that an economist unwilling to draw upon other disciplines is not getting away from the need for a multi-disciplinary orientation. He is in fact continuing to employ a primitive sociology or a primitive political science or a primitive social psychology in his economic analysis. The study of the land problem provides abundant proof of this profound observation. This survey attempts to emphasise that the gaps in land reforms research cannot be filled up by economists without the assistance of other disciplines.

Third, land reforms research in India has in recent years been virtually identified with the study of problems thrown up by the land legislation and its implementation. This was not only the central preoccupation of most research workers but research work in this field was also critically evaluated by competent scholars. While not denying the importance of these problems, I found the equation of land reforms with land legislation and its implementation not very satisfactory. The treatment of land reforms cannot be adequate without studies of the many-sided problems of the agrarian social structure and of agrarian transformation. This survey, therefore, should more appropriately be called a research survey of the land problem and of land reforms in India.

Finally, the survey covers studies both by professional social scientists and by political activists and administrators who have made an important contribution to land reforms studies. A beginning has been made here to

## *Preface*

draw the attention of professionals to the studies by non-professionals and also to convey to the latter knowledge and information about the work done on this subject by the former. The survey indicates how interaction between the academics and the activists can fruitfully contribute to the development of scientific knowledge in the field of land reforms. An attempt has also been made to evaluate the contributions to agrarian studies made in the pre-independence period.

A research survey necessarily involves expressing opinions and views on the work of others. One would be failing in one's duty if one shied away from the task of critical evaluation. At the same time any criticism even by the most dispassionate reviewer would bear the stamp of his subjectivity. Therefore, this survey should not be treated as an attempt to sit in judgement over the work of others but only as a contribution to scientific discussion. It is in the course of discussion and of discussion alone that the subjectivity of one scholar is corrected by the contributions of other scholars. Scientific objectivity in this way does not preclude but presupposes the clash of subjectivities of a number of scholars.

P.C. JOSHI

Social and Economic Growth Section  
Institute of Economic Growth  
Delhi  
March 1975



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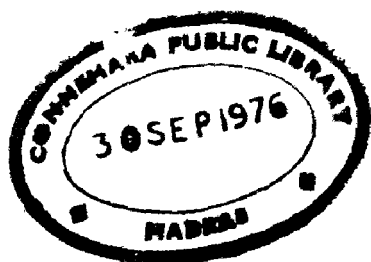
The first draft of this survey was completed in August 1971. Thereafter a seminar of some selected scholars and specialists was arranged by the ICSSR at Delhi for discussions on this draft. These included Prof. Baljit Singh, Prof. Wolf Ladejinsky, Prof. V.S. Vyas, Prof. C.H. Shah, Prof. Yogendra Singh, Prof. Bipan Chandra, Prof. Gopal Krishna, and Prof. Ramkrishna Mukherjee. Prof. M.L. Dantwala read the entire draft and gave me detailed comments through correspondence. Prof. K.N. Raj drew my attention to certain errors of interpretation in the earlier draft. Prof. C.H. Hanumantha Rao, Prof. Andre Beteille, and Prof. G. Parthasarathy gave their comments through informal discussions. The comments made by each one of the scholars provided stimulation for further reflection on many issues. Even though I did not agree with all the criticisms, I benefited a great deal from them in revising this survey. My debt to these scholars is, therefore, very great. I am also grateful to a number of political leaders and administrators who showed keen interest in this work and encouraged me to prepare this revised version.

I have derived benefit from discussions on land problems with Prof. V.K.R.V. Rao and with my colleagues at the Institute of Economic Growth over a number of years. Many a point which has been developed in this report first emerged in the course of these discussions. The responsibility for the opinions expressed in this report and for whatever errors remain is entirely mine.

Thanks are due to the Indian Council of Social Science Research for sponsoring this research survey and also for granting permission to publish it as a separate book. I hope this will make it possible for this survey to reach the hands of specialists as well as non-specialists interested in the subject of land reforms.

To Mr. J.P. Naik, Member-Secretary of the ICSSR, I am deeply indebted for the way he combined an exacting attitude with appreciation of the numerous problems involved in a work of this nature.

I am indebted to several persons who helped in finalising this work: to my wife, Gouri, who not only helped in many ways while I was working on this survey but also prepared typed copies of this survey; to Mr. T.C. Jain for typing out the bibliography; to Mr. R.R. Umesh, Mr. Amit Mitra, Miss Asha Sachdev, and Miss Kumkum Kapoor each of whom worked on the preparation of the bibliography for a short period, and to the Librarian and the staff of the Library of the Institute of Economic Growth who rendered all types of library assistance.



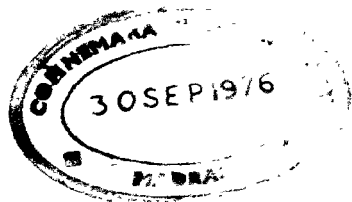
To  
my teacher, the late Professor Radhakamal  
Mukerjee, one of the pioneers of Indian  
agrarian studies



**PART I**

**LAND REFORMS IN INDIA:**

**TRENDS AND PERSPECTIVES**



## SECTION I

### Agrarian Studies Before Independence

#### CHAPTER I

#### INTRODUCTION

THE STUDY OF THE AGRARIAN STRUCTURE in India has developed into one of the most important themes of social science research. A survey of agrarian studies has therefore become a matter of fundamental importance. Firstly, such a survey would provide an account of the growth of scientific knowledge on an important aspect of Indian society. Secondly, in view of the basic nature of the agrarian question, a survey of agrarian studies throws up some of the problems of the growth of social science itself. In particular, it brings out sharply the limitations of any narrow specialisation for an understanding of the total agrarian problem. It has been said that 'problems do not respect frontiers between conventional academic "disciplines"'<sup>1</sup> This is specially true of the agrarian problem which calls for a researcher who may be a specialist and a generalist at the same time. A survey of agrarian studies would illustrate how the interdependence of specialisation and integration of knowledge is a crucial condition of social science growth in underdeveloped countries.

The survey also shows the dangers of any construction of concepts and theories unrelated to fact-finding and of fact-finding unrelated to matrix of concepts and theories. This danger is specially great in underdeveloped countries where social science has grown through 'implantation'<sup>2</sup> and where indiscriminate borrowing of concepts and theories has occurred without sufficient empirical exploration of one's own society.

The survey pinpoints the dangers of equating growth of social sciences with technical sophistication. What social science perhaps needs most in underdeveloped countries is the formulation of relevant questions of research and the exploration of tools and techniques most appropriate for tackling these questions. This is not to underestimate the importance of the technical quality of research. What is emphasised by the survey is the dependence of quality on innovations in the field of scientific methodology and techniques and not on mechanical imitation. When technical sophistication

1. Stanislaw Andreski, *Elements of Comparative Sociology*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1964, p. 60.

2. Ralph Pieris, "The Implantation of Sociology in Asia", *International Social Science Journal*, Vol. XXI, No. 3, 1969.

becomes an end in itself, it distorts the very development of social science research. Such obsession with technical virtuosity for its own sake, however, is not just an academic lapse or aberration. It is part of an attempt by vested interests to deflect social science from performing its critical function and make it ineffectual from the social point of view. And this brings us to the third important aspect of this survey viz. its contribution to sociology of knowledge or to an understanding of the role of ideology in social sciences. This point is of special interest for underdeveloped countries in view of some recent attempts to deny the role of ideology in social sciences. We would try to indicate here the relevance of ideology for social science with illustrations from the field of agrarian study.

The agrarian question involves conflicts of interests which assume both naked and disguised forms. These conflicts are fought out not only on the economic and the political plane but also on the intellectual or the scientific plane. Conflicts of interests are thus transformed into conflicts of ideologies and of scientific approaches and interpretations.

It is important to note that the peasantry constitutes the most important 'class' in a predominantly agrarian country like India and the peasant problem is the hard core of the Indian problem. Nevertheless, the transformation of this problem into a major issue of ideological confrontation and politics was not achieved by politicians and ideologues of the peasantry. The peasantry was not able to throw up its own politicians and ideologues. It was mobilised as an ally in the multi-class national movement against imperialism under the leadership of the rising middle class. Some attempts were also made by the critical elements in the multi-class alliance which looked beyond nationalism to activate the peasants also for social transformation. The peasant question therefore threw up not a single, unified ideology but diverse and even conflicting ideologies, the character of the ideology being dependent on the character and perspective of the social force which sought peasant support. On the agrarian question there were thus two broad types of conflicts of interests during the colonial phase: the first, between the imperial interests and the national interests and the second, between classes within the Indian society itself. Both types of conflicts gave rise to ideological confrontations. While the former was responsible for the confrontation between the colonial and the nationalist ideologies, the latter gave rise to distinct ideological demarcations within the nationalist ideology. These conflicts within the nationalist ideology assumed primacy after the achievement of independence.

It may be noted that an ideology is at once a rationalisation of class interests and a view of social reality from the standpoint of the interests of a class. It is a mixture of the false and true representation of social reality. An ideological confrontation between a dominant and a rising class involves a restructuring of the existing representation of social reality which serves the interests of the dominant class. Thus one class trying to oust the other

class from a position of dominance is led towards exposing the representation of reality created by the dominant class in its own interests as a false representation. The ideology of the rising class thus offers a new representation revealing new facets of social reality and providing a new basis for winning over the vast masses of the peasants to one's side. Ideological confrontation between classes is in this way conducive also to the development of scientific knowledge<sup>3</sup> by creating the need for new representations of social reality in place of the old.

Applying this general framework to the agrarian question it can be said that the 'nationalist ideology' was not merely a means of detaching the peasants from the colonial ideology. It also represented a greater approximation to truth about social reality than the colonial ideology. And within the nationalist ideology the radical-nationalist or the Marxist ideology were not merely a means of detaching the peasants from the conservative nationalist ideology. They also captured certain vital facets of social reality better than the conservative-nationalist ideology. It should also be noted that the radical-nationalist ideology derived its initial stimulus from a blending of radical liberal thought and classical Marxism and Indian Marxist ideology was based on an adaptation of classical Marxism to Indian conditions. Neither the radical-nationalist nor the Marxist ideology, however, could make a full-fledged transition from an imitative to an innovative phase. As a result their grasp of the specificities of the Indian society and of its dynamics remained inadequate from the point of view of an analysis of the peasant question. The Gandhian ideology in this context was unique as a reflection of the specificities of the peasant question. Reflecting the Janus-like character of the peasantry, it embodied a view of social reality which was at once realistic and Utopian. It was truly representative of the peasant hope as well as its hopelessness in a changing context. The Gandhian ideology raised all the basic problems of the Indian peasant and the answers provided to them on the basis of the adaptations of classical liberal or Marxist thought are inadequate. To respond to these problems afresh is also to throw up a social science more relevant to the Indian situation.

It should be noted that the growth of scientific studies on the agrarian question was not unrelated to the stimulation or the suppression of scientific enquiry on account of the clash of interests as reflected in conflicting ideologies. A survey of agrarian studies is rewarding therefore as a source of enlightenment on the influence of interests, via ideology, on scientific enquiry itself.

IN THIS SECTION WE PRESENT a broad survey of agrarian studies in India before independence. The colonial phase of Indian history offers an excellent

3. For the role of ideology in social science, see: (i) Oscar Lange, *Political Economy*, Vol. I, Pergamon, New York, 1963; (ii) Maurice Dobb, *Ideology and Economic Theory*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1973.

field for an exercise in the sociology of knowledge. The influence of interests on the process of formation of ideas is much more transparent during the colonial phase than during the subsequent phases. This is because the political articulation of 'interests' and the study of the agrarian question were undertaken during this period by the same persons. The political 'activist' or the 'agitator' was also the first scientific 'researcher' into the agrarian question. Later the professional social scientist appeared on the scene. But it is noteworthy that the social scientist failed or succeeded in presenting a meaningful analysis of the agrarian question in the same measure as he avoided or took full cognizance of the conflicts of interests in the field of the agrarian social structure. A survey of agrarian studies thus helps to demolish certain myths about the growth of social science propagated by vested interests. There is no greater falsehood than the view that the 'end of ideology' constitutes the starting-point of social science.

4. For an exposition of the 'end of ideology' standpoint, see, Daniel Bell, *The End of Ideology*, The Free Press, New York, 1961.

## CHAPTER II

### POLITICAL GENESIS OF AGRARIAN STUDIES

A SURVEY OF AGRARIAN STUDIES must begin by highlighting that the circumstances which gave an initial stimulus to intellectual enquiry into the land problems in India were primarily socio-political. Indeed, the enquiry into the economic problems including the land problem preceded the professionalisation of Indian economic studies. Indeed, Indian economics and sociology emerged as academic disciplines much later than the beginning of Indian economic studies. Enquiries into the land problem were thus initiated by those concerned directly with the formulation of land and revenue policies (or the critique of these policies) and not by professional social scientists.

More specifically, land problem as an area of research was the gift of the British rule during its earlier and more dynamic phase before the so-called Mutiny. This earlier phase of British rule was, in Ranade's words, characterised by 'the tendency to innovation and the levelling of Oriental institutions to the requirements of the most radical theorists in Europe'.<sup>5</sup> This fundamental and drastic tendency was seen in the British interference with the traditional land and revenue systems in India. The policy decision for vast changes in agrarian institutions was preceded as well as followed by a momentous controversy and discussion among British administrators themselves. This discussion on land policy was conducted with an appeal on the one hand to the principles of Western economic theory and on the other to the facts relating to the Indian society in general and the agrarian system in particular as they were perceived by the British administrators.<sup>6</sup>

The 'pre-mutiny' phase of British rule was a very eventful period of modern Indian history not only because it initiated a major change in the traditional agrarian system but also because the very genesis of what is termed the 'land problem in modern India' is in some important respects traceable to the socio-economic impact of those changes. The scope of British land policy and its impact on the traditional agrarian structure continues to be one of the challenging areas of scientific enquiry.

Broadly, the contribution of British rule to development of enquiry into the land problem was threefold:

(i) Firstly, questions relating to the character of the indigenous land

5. Mahadev Govind Ranade, *Essays on Indian Economics*, Third Edition, G.A. Nateson & Co., Madras, 1916, p. 265.

6. (i) Eric Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1959.  
(ii) Sulekh C. Gupta, *Agrarian Relations and Early British Rule in India*, Bombay, 1963.

and revenue systems and their compatibility with economic and social progress were posed for the first time.

- (ii) Secondly, these questions marked the beginnings of an intellectual effort at the level of both theorising and empirical investigations. At the theoretical level, these questions could not be taken up without initiating a general debate on the basic conditions of economic and social progress on the one hand and the relevance of Western concepts and theories of progress to Indian conditions on the other.
- (iii) Thirdly, these questions also created the need for precise and authentic data regarding the institutional framework of Indian society including its land and revenue systems. The creation of agencies for data collection and the use of modern methods and techniques in economic and social surveys were developments of far-reaching importance during this period. These laid the basis for many fruitful enquiries and studies on the nature of Indian institutions in general and the Indian land system in particular. It is necessary to remember that the outstanding contributions by Baden Powell on *The Land Systems of British India* (1892) and *The Indian Village Community* (1896) and by Henry S. Maine on *The Early History of Institutions* (1875) and *The Village Communities in the East and the West* (1876) and by numerous other scholar-administrators were products of the intellectual ferment associated with early British rule. Similarly, the Settlement Reports and Gazeteers for various provinces constituted repositories of valuable empirical material collected through painstaking field-work and investigation under the guidance of competent administrators.

Thus in India agrarian research was not the gift of social science; social scientific enquiry was itself initiated and propelled by the chain of momentous developments in the political sphere during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Political factors also played a primary role in bringing about a shift in the focus of intellectual enquiry even during the later period of British rule.

The political situation in India was vastly changed after the Mutiny. There was deep and widespread dissatisfaction among different classes of Indian society which were adversely affected by the impact of British policies, specially land and revenue policies. This took the form of a serious political explosion known in Indian history as the Mutiny of 1857, resulting in grave threat to the newly-established British rule in the country.<sup>7</sup> This great event brought about a reversal of the assumptions and premises of British policy in India. In particular, the Mutiny marked an end to the era of British-sponsored change and innovation in the Indian institutional structure. It marked the beginning of a new era of maintenance of *status quo* in the

7. P.C. Joshi, *Rebellion 1857; A Symposium*, People's Publishing House, Delhi, 1957.

institutional structure, specially the property structure. Henceforth, the aim of British policy was to explore prospects of growth and development within the given institutional framework.

The transition from limited dynamism to caution and conservatism in the political sphere led to a similar trend in the intellectual sphere. In place of a relatively uninhibited enquiry into *all* important aspects of the Indian economic problem there was now a pronounced tendency towards restricting the scope of enquiry to such *selected* aspects as did not lead towards a sharp critique of British policies. Consequently, questions relating to the institutional structure evolved under British rule and its relation to economic backwardness were, by and large, excluded from the purview of all official enquiries and investigations while questions unrelated to the British-created institutional structures were given exaggerated importance. The most important consequence of this shift in the focus of enquiry was that the study of agrarian structure was relegated to the background in all important enquiries into the problem of agricultural backwardness.

The most significant example of this shift was the Report of the Royal Commission on Agriculture. This Commission was appointed in 1928 'to make recommendations for the improvement of agriculture and to promote the welfare and prosperity of the rural population'. The scope of the Commission's enquiry was, however, circumscribed by its terms of reference which directed the Commission 'not to make recommendations regarding the existing system of land-ownership and tenancy or of assessment of land revenue and irrigation charges' (1928). In short, if the political requirements of the pre-Mutiny phase of British rule brought into prominence the land problem and land policy as major problem areas for enquiry, the political situation after the Mutiny led to a decline in the importance attached to these problem areas.

In the post-Mutiny period of British rule agrarian problems ceased to be the main focus of enquiry by the British rulers. Any insight into the agrarian structure which was available from official sources in the later period was thus a by-product of enquiries and investigations into other aspects of the agricultural problem. If some light was also thrown on the agrarian relationships it is because of the close inter-relation of the agricultural economy with the agrarian structure. Thus the official reports of the Famine Commission (1898; 1901), of the Deccan Riots Commission (1876), of the Bengal Land Revenue Commission (1938), of the Censuses of India and of the Provincial Censuses from 1881, of the Punjab Board of Economic Enquiry, of the Central and Provincial Banking Enquiry Committees (1929), the Gazeteers and Settlement Reports etc. etc. contained a wealth of data and rich insights on various aspects of the agrarian structure in different regions of India.

With the decline of official interest on the agrarian structure, the thread of agrarian research was resumed by the representatives of the emerging

Indian nationalism. The nationalists again pushed into prominence the land problem and land policy as major problem areas for study. And they made very skilful use of the information and insights scattered in official reports.

Here it is important to take note of the intellectual confrontation between the 'nationalist' viewpoint on the one hand and the 'British Imperial' viewpoint on the other on questions of India's poverty and backwardness. Why was India so poor and underdeveloped under British rule? To this question posed with increasing sharpness by nationalist opinion in the country, the British response took the shape of what Myrdal has called the 'colonial theory' of poverty and economic backwardness.<sup>8</sup> This theory tried to explain India's poverty and backwardness without reference to the economic and social framework created under British rule. In particular, the British explained rural poverty and agricultural backwardness without reference to the agrarian structure created under British rule. Re-stated in Nehru's words, the colonial theory simply amounted to saying: 'If India is poor, that is the fault of her social customs, her *baniyas* and money-lenders and above all her enormous population.'<sup>9</sup>

The 'colonial theory' represented the guide-line of British officials and administrators. It influenced also the orientation of many social scientists and the scope and content of their work. Vera Anstey's *The Economic Development of India* (1957) first published in 1929 provides a good example of the subtle intrusion of colonial theory in scientific research.

At a general level the author presents a very perceptive diagnosis of agricultural backwardness in India. In her view agricultural modernisation in many countries of the West was effected in two main phases. The first phase sometimes characterised as the 'Agricultural Revolution' concerned major structural changes like 'emancipation of serfs, revolutions in the systems of land tenure and the adoption of improved methods of arable farming' etc., all contributing towards 'the general adoption of commercial farming'. The second was that of 'scientific agriculture'. Anstey observes: 'Efforts have so far been concentrated on lines of policy more characteristic of the second phase than of the first whereas subsistence farming, scattered holding and the old systems of land tenure still prevail. Possibly this may help to account for the great difficulty experienced in accelerating agricultural improvement in India.'<sup>10</sup>

This perceptive diagnosis remains a casual observation in Anstey's book rather than a guide to rigorous enquiry into the phenomenon of backward agriculture. The analysis of the relation of the land system to agricultural backwardness has thus not been pursued on the ground that 'radical

8. Gunnar Myrdal, *The Challenge of World Poverty*, Penguin, London, 1970, p. 17.

9. Dorothy Norman, *Nehru : The First Sixty Years*, Vol. II, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1965, p. 556.

10. Vera Anstey, *The Economic Development of India*, Longmans Green & Co., London, 1957, pp. 158-159.

reforms' in the land system are 'politically impossible' under a foreign government.<sup>11</sup> The agricultural problem of India is therefore treated mainly as a problem of population pressure on land, retrograde social institutions like caste and joint family, the lack of capital and other resistances to scientific farming.<sup>12</sup> Anstey's book is a very good example of the subtle way in which political factors influence not only *what* problems are studied by social scientists but *how* they are studied. And during the later part of British rule conservative social scientists either overlooked or soft-pedalled the importance of land relations as a fruitful area of economic and social research.

In contrast, land problem and land policy (including revenue policy) were proposed as crucial problem areas for intellectual enquiry by Indian nationalists from an early period. This concern for the agrarian structure and its effects on economic progress was a very important part of the *institutional approach* upheld by the early nationalists. Among them Ranade considered institutionalism to be the key for the development of an 'Indian political economy'. He questioned the view that 'the truths of economic science... are absolutely and demonstrably true and must be accepted as guides of conduct for all time and place whatever might be the stage of national advance'.<sup>13</sup> )

We have quoted Ranade's views here only to show how the *political* necessity of providing an effective critique of the 'colonial theory' led him towards questioning the very methodology and premises which were implicit in that theory. It led him towards exploring a new methodology and new premises so as to contribute an alternative theory which tried to establish a causal nexus between the institutional structure created by the British and the phenomenon of Indian economic backwardness.

From the premises and assumptions of the colonial theory Ranade makes a break in two important respects in explaining the backwardness of Indian agriculture. The colonial theorists underplayed if not ignored the question of the institutional structure. Even when they adopted an institutional approach, they avoided reference to the hard core of the institutional structure viz. the land relations which had a direct bearing on economic backwardness and whose restructuring required drastic state intervention. The colonial theorists drew attention to only such elements of the institutional structure e.g. religion and caste as influenced the economy in an indirect way. In fact, the role of a retrograde land system in buttressing retrograde social relations was always overlooked.

Unlike the colonial theorists Ranade tries to relate the backwardness of Indian agriculture to the economic basis of the institutional structure viz. the retrograde systems of land relations in India, under which the state had

11. *Ibid.*, p. 103.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 157.

13. Ranade, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

become the super-landlord leaving the landlords and tenants without any incentives or resources for agricultural development. Another significant intellectual advance made by Ranade distinguished him from colonial theorists (and even from the Nationalist Agrarians of the later period). This was his emphasis on the link between agricultural regeneration and industrialisation. In his view lack of industrialisation thwarted agricultural regeneration by creating overpressure on land and thus by perpetuating the retrograde agrarian structure. In other words, Ranade saw the two-way relationship between institutional structure and economic backwardness. It is not only the former which caused the latter but the latter also in turn re-enforced the former. At the operational level therefore it was necessary to work on two fronts rather than only one.<sup>14</sup> Restructuring of the institutional framework had to be combined with creation of new economic opportunities. In the absence of the latter the institutional structure of the old type would re-appear in a new garb.]

Another nationalist critic of colonial theory was R.C. Dutt who attributed agricultural backwardness to the British-created 'institutional framework of agricultural production', including land tenure, credit system, revenue system, marketing structure<sup>15</sup> etc. Dutt contributed insights into the interconnections and interactions between different elements of the institutional framework. He also indicated the scope as well as the limits of a land policy in tackling the evils of the institutional framework. In concrete terms he also showed how lack of industrialisation accentuated basic evils of the agrarian structure including preponderance of tenancy and small-sized holdings.

The analysis of the early nationalists, however, did not develop into a full-fledged exploration of an alternative institutional framework. This is because the early nationalists could not perceive the working of the colonial system and the constraints arising therefrom for economic development.

Interest in the land problem and land policy was thus a part of the emerging confrontation between the colonialist and nationalist standpoints. In the formative years of Indian nationalism this confrontation encompassed the interests of only a narrow section of Indian society which did not pose a major challenge to the dominant economic and political regime. The intellectual perspectives represented by the ideologues of this narrow section were also circumscribed by this basic class limitation. The understanding of the relationship between Great Britain and India and of the internal class structure as conditioned by that relationship—this was an intellectual task to which not the early nationalists but their successors addressed themselves under the stimulating influence of new currents and forces in the

14. P.K. Gopalkrishnan, *Development of Economic Ideas in India, 1880-1950*, People's Publishing House, Delhi, 1959, pp. 110-111.

15. *Ibid.*, pp. 162-163.

socio-political sphere. The spread of nationalist awakening to newer social classes and strata and specially to rural areas widened the social base of Indian nationalism. It heralded a new epoch challenging the *upper class* and *urban* dominance of Indian politics. It initiated a new phase of anti-imperialist mobilisation on a much wider basis including specially the Indian peasantry. The intellectual response to the new challenges resulted in sharp demarcation from the perspectives of earlier nationalists. *Three* clear approaches to the Indian economic problem crystallised as a result of the critical appraisal of the early nationalist approach. These can be identified as the *Gandhian* approach, the *radical-nationalist* approach and the *Marxist* approach.

In the background of the rural awakening which characterised the anti-imperialist mobilisation under Gandhi, there also emerged a sharper perception of some of the basic aspects of the Indian economic problem and specially of the rural problem. Even though Gandhi did not locate the basic contradictions of the Indian rural society in the sphere of its land relations he provided insights into certain aspects of the rural problem which eluded not only his predecessors but also his contemporaries as well as his successors. And here even though his *prescriptions* were not always sound and were sometimes backward-looking, his *perceptions* were eminently sound and of enduring significance. Among the many insights into the rural problem which Gandhi contributed, the following are quite basic:

- (i) The focus on the village as the backbone of the Indian society and on the positive traditions of the traditional village economy—its emphasis on interdependence and cooperation and balance between small industry, agriculture and social services which required to be preserved and reinforced.
- (ii) The insight into the rural-urban cleavage in the context of foreign rule and the critique of conceptions treating the rural economy as a hinterland of the urban areas.
- (iii) The critique of the parasitical nature of Western industrialism from the point of view of over-populated agrarian countries like India and the need for a new type of town-village interdependence.
- (iv) A synthetic view of rural economic backwardness and the need for many-sided economic, technological, social, political and cultural innovations for rural uplift.
- (v) The emphasis on the human factor and man-power mobilisation for development.

Gandhi thus initiated the threefold transition in Indian life—from partial to total confrontation with imperialism, from urban to rural orientation of Indian politics and from main preoccupation with the interests of the upper classes of the town and the village to encompassing the interests of the masses

in the course of political mobilisation.<sup>16</sup> This provided the basis for the emergence of the radical-nationalist and the Marxist perspectives which presented new perceptions and insights into the Indian economic problem. Both these perspectives focus attention on the gaps and inadequacies of the early nationalist and the Gandhian approaches.

One of the major consequences of this new ferment of ideas was a sharper perception of the relationship between Great Britain and India in politico-economic terms, that is to say, as a relationship between an industrially developed metropolis and its agricultural hinterland. This represented a sharp break from the perspectives of early nationalists like Ranade and Dutt. It is important to note that the early nationalists did not regard the end of British rule as a necessary condition for independent economic development. In fact, Ranade was of the view that despite some of the harmful consequences of British rule, India's contact with the British represented 'the beam of light which alone illumines the surrounding darkness'.<sup>17</sup>

A totally different view of the British rule emerges from the writings of the later nationalists like Jawaharlal Nehru. Consider, for instance, the following observation :

... nearly all our major problems to-day have grown up during British rule and as a result of British policy; the minority problem; various vested interests, foreign and Indian; the lack of industry and the neglect of agriculture; the extreme backwardness of the social services and above all, the tragic poverty of the people.<sup>18</sup>

In this background the concept of *colonial economy* was a tremendous theoretical advance which shed a new light on the phenomenon of Indian economic backwardness.<sup>19</sup> In other words, Indian backwardness was no more regarded as simple backwardness of a country which had lagged behind in the economic race. It was now seen as backwardness of a country which had been reduced into a colony and which was exploited as a source of raw materials and as a market for the manufactures of the dominant country. The abolition of this backwardness was linked in the first stage with the abolition of the colonial system. In other words, independent economic development and colonial status could not go together. In short, with the new political imperatives *the theory of Indian economic backwardness was reformulated as a theory of colonialism.*

16. P.C. Joshi, "Developmental Perspectives in India: Some Reflections on Gandhi and Nehru", in B.R. Nanda and V.C. Joshi (eds.), *Essays in Modern Indian History*, Vikas, Delhi, 1972.

17. Ranade, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

18. Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, London, 1946, p. 304.

19. (i) On the concept of 'colonial economy' see, Bipan Chandra, *Colonialism and Modernisation*, Thirty Second Session, Indian History Congress, Jabalpur, Dec. 28-30, 1970. (ii) On colonial agrarian structure, see, P.C. Joshi, "Marx and the Agrarian Problem in India", in P.C. Joshi (ed.), *Homage to Marx*, People's Publishing House, Delhi, 1969.

The problem of land was no more projected as a problem of feudal land relations and social customs inherited from the pre-British period. The complexity of the land problem was perceived as arising from the fact that India's land relations after the British impact were neither feudal nor capitalist but belonged to a third viz. the 'colonial' category.

Colonialism exercised the most important influence in shaping the institutional framework of agriculture. By bringing about the de-industrialisation of the country it led to manpower overpressure on agriculture and consequently to enormous competition for land. Further, Indian agriculture was drawn into the vortex of the market and commercialisation without much technological change. This latter circumstance together with the first pushed into prominence a conglomerate of landlords-moneylenders-traders serving as the agency of colonialism and appropriating the surplus from the direct producers, without this surplus contributing to capital accumulation either in industry or in agriculture. The chronically depressed state of the agricultural economy was consequently regarded as inherent in the colonial economic system. In short, in the new phase the explanation of agricultural backwardness was also provided in terms of the theory of economic colonialism.

If the accentuation of anti-colonial consciousness represented the first major feature of both the radical-nationalist and the Marxist viewpoints, the growing awareness of internal class cleavage was another. While the first led to the identification of colonialism as an economic category, the latter led to a perception of some of the glaring class contradictions within the rural economy. It should be noted that early nationalists like Ranade and Dutt had focussed attention mainly on the conflict of interest between the British rulers on the one hand and all the classes of Indian society on the other. It should also be noted that even some of the British administrators in the earlier period and Indian traditionalists in the later period were inclined to regard the social structure of the Indian village as a 'community' free from class conflict and based on inner homogeneity and cohesion. The new political wave led to a questioning of this view of *harmony of interest* between all classes underlying the conceptions of early nationalists as well as some of the British administrators. It brought to light the *conflict of interest* between different classes, specially the landlords, money-lenders and traders on the one hand and the peasants and the landless masses on the other. Some of these social conflicts were also perceived as conflicts between the town and the village. Colonialism was now credited with having sharpened these cleavages which existed in a latent form in the traditional social structure.

The questioning of the earlier assumption of the harmony of interest among classes and the growing acceptance of the assumption of conflict of interest logically led to the third important development in the political sphere viz. the questioning of the imperialist and the conservative-nationalist

prescriptions for economic development.

It should be remembered that the early nationalists had criticised British rule for its *un-British* approach towards problems of Indian development. The introduction of a capitalist framework in both industry and agriculture was regarded by them as necessary for India's economic progress. The British had introduced some changes in this direction but opposed those other changes which would culminate in capitalist transformation. In other words, the earlier nationalists considered economic development to be inseparable from the capitalist path of development.<sup>20</sup> They belonged to a period of ascendant capitalism in the West and during this period Western theorists enquiring into the Wealth of Nations regarded capitalist institutions as indispensable for economic progress in all parts of the world. [Even Marx recognised its contribution to economic progress and seemed to believe that underdeveloped countries in Asia would have to traverse the same road for overcoming their economic backwardness.<sup>21</sup>

When the early nationalists believed in the necessity of capitalism for economic progress, it was not because they were the apologists of capitalism but because they fully concurred with the general values and beliefs prevalent in the historical period to which they belonged. Their ideas regarding the conditions of agricultural progress were a logical extension of their ideas regarding the conditions of economic progress in general. In the West, agricultural progress required the expropriation of small peasant property and such expropriation was deemed necessary for progress in all countries. In his famous essay 'The Law of Land Sale in British India' Ranade argued: 'In all countries property, whether in land or other goods, must gravitate towards that class which has more intelligence and greater foresight, and practises abstinence, and must slip from the hands of those who are ignorant, improvident and hopeless to stand on their own resources. This is a law of providence and can never be wisely or safely ignored by practical statesmen for any fancied political or sentimental consideration.'<sup>22</sup>

Similarly, commenting on 'The Bengal Tenancy Bill', Ranade observed. 'A complete divorce from land of those who cultivate it is a national evil, and no less an evil is it to find one dead level of small farmers all over the land. High and petty farming. . . this mixed constitution of rural society is necessary to secure the stability and progress of the country.'<sup>23</sup>

The thinking of early nationalists on the land problem is thus based on the incompatibility of peasant agriculture with the demands of agricultural progress. The questioning of this basic assumption reflecting an anti-peasant

20. Bipan Chanda, *The Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India*, People's Publishing House, Delhi, 1966.

21. K. Marx, *Capital*, Vol. I, Preface.

22. Ranade, *op. cit.*, pp. 297-298.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 259.

and pro-upper class bias was the third major development at the political level since the twenties of the present century. Thinking on the agrarian problem began to reflect a pro-peasant orientation from this period which provided stimulus to the search for a developmental perspective favourable to peasant interests. In other words, the alternative to capitalism emerged as a major intellectual challenge from this period.

What impact did these new political developments have on the scope and direction of agrarian research? As already indicated the political process brought to the forefront four new and fundamental problem areas viz.:

- (i) The evolution of the semi-feudal agrarian structure as a consequence of the transformation of the Indian economy into a colony of the British Empire.
- (ii) The emergence of the rural-urban cleavage as a major feature of the colonial economy.
- (iii) The internal class structure of the Indian agrarian society as conditioned by the three modes of exploitation of the agricultural producer through *landlordism*, *usury* and the *price mechanism*.
- (iv) The non-relevance of the Western model of agricultural transformation and industrialisation to India's predominantly agrarian economy and society dominated by small producers and the groping for an alternative model suited to Indian conditions.

We have indicated the convergence of the radical-nationalist and the Marxist position in so far as both identified India as a colonial economy and the agrarian class structure as a semi-feudal class structure based on the triple modes of exploitation of the peasantry. But one must also identify the points of divergence between the two approaches. The radical-nationalists did not always try to analyse the phenomena of colonialism or feudalism in India with reference to a scientific methodology or theory. Their perception, therefore, was more intuitive than theoretical, more impressionistic than empirical. In contrast the Marxists tried to present 'colonialism' and 'feudalism' as scientific-economic categories and to analyse the Indian situation in terms of Marx's class theory in general and Lenin's theory of imperialism in particular. The radical-nationalists' perception therefore could seldom go beyond vague and general indictment of imperialism. It was far removed from a scientific critique based on an understanding of the 'laws of motion' of the colonial system.

Another point of basic divergence was that the radical-nationalists viewed the agrarian class structure in terms of a two-class model of landlords, money-lenders and traders on the one hand and the peasants on the other. They used the general term *peasantry* and tended to overlook the class distinctions within the broad peasant category. The Marxists, in contrast, showed some awareness of the latent or emerging class stratification within the peasantry. They indicated how commercialisation coupled with 'certain pitiful attempts at carrying through agrarian reforms' facili-

tated the 'gradual conversion of semi-feudal landlordism into capitalist landlordism and in certain cases the establishment of a narrow stratum of kulak peasants'.<sup>24</sup> They showed some perception of how the upper layer of the peasants had potentialities of growing into a new exploiting class as employers of labour, money-lenders and traders. The Marxists therefore anticipated the potentialities of conflict between the upper layers of the peasants on the one hand and the poor peasants and landless masses on the other.

Finally, the radical-nationalists and the Marxists both advocated drastic changes in the land and revenue system in favour of the peasants. This was in contrast to the view of early nationalists like Ranade who seemed to rely on the dynamic landlord as an engine of development. But while both the radical-nationalists and Marxists supported peasant-oriented land reforms, the former gave greater weight in their analysis to the interests of the rich and middle peasants. The latter on the other hand gave greater attention in their analysis to the interests of the poor peasants and the landless classes.

One must take note of another difference between the radical-national and the Marxist interpretations of the peasant question. The Marxists in India who took a very narrow view of the Marxian concept of class concentrated only on questions relating to the 'economic basis' and ignored questions relating to the 'superstructure'. The radical-nationalists who had no such theoretical constraints or doctrinaire bias gave adequate prominence to the problems created by caste, untouchability, religion, language and such other factors in rural society.<sup>25</sup>

We are not mentioning here the divergence between the two viewpoints on questions relating to forms of struggle and methods of mobilisation. In brief it can be said that on the question of anti-feudal mobilisation the radical-nationalists by and large avoided the tasks of independent class mobilisation of peasants outside their political mobilisation under the Indian National Congress. The Marxists in principle emphasised the necessity of class mobilisation of the peasants in kisan sabhas, even though in actual practice they could not ensure a greater weightage to the poor peasants and landless labourers in the mobilisation process. Further, some sections of the radical-nationalists were wedded to the principle of non-violence in the course of peasant mobilisation. The Marxists had no such commitment to this principle.

Among the radical-nationalists contributing to the understanding of the Indian agrarian situation, the most outstanding was Jawaharlal Nehru.

24. Sixth Congress of the Communist International, *Revolutionary Movement in Colonies and Semi-Colonies*, People's Publishing House, Bombay, 1928.

25. This becomes clear specially from the writings of Narendra Dev, Ram Manohar Lohia and Jayaprakash Narayan pertaining to the pre-independence period.

For an adequate view of Nehru's contributions one has to refer to his *Autobiography* (1936), to his Presidential addresses during the pre-independence period and, last but not the least, to his major work *The Discovery of India* (1946). The other notable contributors to radical-nationalist thought were Narendra Dev, Ram Manohar Lohia and Jayaprakash Narayan. Further one would also have to refer to the resolutions of the Indian National Congress on the land problem which carry the impress of radical nationalist thinking after the 30's.<sup>26</sup>

The contributions by the Marxists on the agrarian question are to be mainly found in the political theses of the Communist Party of India. But among individual contributions the most important are *The Agrarian Problem in India* (1937) by Z.A. Ahmad, *India Today* (1940) by R. Palme Dutt, and *The Problem of India* (1940) by K.S. Shelvankar. The *Memorandum* submitted by the Bengal Kisan Sabha to the Indian Famine Enquiry Commission in 1946 is also an important contribution to Marxist analysis of the agrarian problem. It analyses on the basis of the Marxian approach the Bengal agrarian situation in the later British period. All these Marxist analyses drew upon the penetrating and perceptive analysis of the agrarian problem offered in the political thesis called *The Revolutionary Movement in the Colonies and Semi-Colonies* by the Communist International in 1928.

We have so far tried to show how the political forces of Indian nationalism threw up the agrarian problem into prominence. The leaders of Indian nationalism not only contributed penetrating insights into the nature of this problem. The views and counter-views among political leaders in different phases of the nationalist movement helped to focus attention on different facets of this problem. The need for new theoretical perspectives and for empirical investigations was also felt most strongly by political leaders who had to grapple with practical problems of ideological struggle and political mobilisation against imperialist rule. In a research survey on the land problem, however, it is also important to assess how far political activists contributed to the development of a scientific methodology for studying the Indian land problem.

It is important to note that taken as a whole Indian political leaders did not give much thought to the question of methods of study. In fact if we consider from the yardstick of interest in methods of study or the technical quality of analyses, we notice a distinct decline as we try to make a comparison between Ranade or Dutt on the one hand and Gandhi, Nehru or Marxist activists like Z.A. Ahmad, K.S. Shelvankar and Bhowani Sen on the other. Ranade's *Essays on Indian Economics* when read after three-quarters of a century convey the impression of the logical, cultivated and critical mind of a professional social scientist. His essays read more like

26. The Indian National Congress, *Resolutions on Economic Policy, Programme and Allied Matters (1924-1969)*, AICC, New Delhi, 1969.

academic papers than like speeches by a political agitator. In particular his essay on 'Indian Political Economy' should be treated as an important contribution to re-defining the scope and approach of social science in general and economics in particular in the light of Indian conditions. In the later period of Indian nationalism political leaders failed to maintain this level of analysis. Gandhi was no doubt a person having an extraordinarily sharp mind and great intuitive powers. But he had greater faith in his 'inner voice' than on a theoretical approach. Despite an outstanding contribution in terms of insights into Indian problems, his contribution to methods of thought and study is therefore not significant. Similarly, Nehru was a thinker of a very high order and firmly committed to a scientific temper. But intellectual depth, logical rigour and scientific method were foreign to his mode of thought. It is no surprise therefore that the habit of thinking aloud and lack of method did not allow a gifted person like Nehru to make any major contributions to theory or to methods of study even when he made significant intuitive advances in the realm of both understanding and social action.

Indian Marxists also show the same deficiency viz., the neglect of questions of method in their analyses of the agrarian problem. They do not always distinguish between the general Marxian method on the one hand and the concepts and analytical structures evolved by Marx and other outstanding Marxists for other countries on the other. There is a tendency to apply mechanically the latter without taking the specific features of the Indian situation into account.<sup>27</sup> The formulations tentatively offered by Marx and others on India on the basis of extremely inadequate materials are not re-appraised in the light of more authentic and more substantial empirical investigations available after the death of Marx.<sup>28</sup>

The disregard for questions of method did not allow Indian Marxists to break new ground in terms of either creative theorising or empirical investigations. The scientific failure of Indian Marxists becomes clear as one compares them to the Chinese Marxists. No Indian Marxist made such contribution as Mao Tse-tung<sup>29</sup> did to general methodology ('On Contradictions' and 'On Practice') or to elaboration of the concepts of the 'colonial society' and 'feudal society' in the light of Chinese condi-

27. For an examination of this issue, see, P.C. Joshi, "Agrarian Social Structure and Social Change", *Sankhya*, Series B, Vol. 31, Parts 3 & 4, Calcutta, 1969.

28. Shafeeq Naqvi, "Marx on Pre-British Indian Society and Economy", *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. IX, No. 4, Dec. 1962.

29. Mao Tse-tung, *Selected Works*, Vols. I, II & III, People's Publishing House, Bombay, 1954. For "On Practice" see, Vol. I, pp. 282-297; for "On Contradiction", see, Vol. II, pp. 13-53; for "The Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party" and "On New Democracy", Vol. II, pp. 72-101 and pp. 106-156; for "Analysis of Classes in Chinese Society" and "How to Analyse Classes in Rural Areas", see, Vol. I, pp. 13-21 and pp. 138-141.

tions or to the theory of colonial revolution ('New Democracy' and 'Chinese Revolution and Chinese Communist Party') or to the methods of agrarian study and investigation ('How to Analyse Classes in the Rural Areas?', 'Reform our Study' and 'Rural Surveys'). Similarly, no Indian Marxist contributed such a comprehensive and rigorous study of rural class stratification as Jen Pi Shi did for China (*Class Stratification in China's Country-side*) which later became the basis of *China's Agrarian Reform Law*.<sup>30</sup> This failure may have been caused by factors operating outside the scientific sphere. As Mao very clearly stated, the weakness of bourgeois development in Asian countries also meant the weakness of social scientific enquiries; and, therefore, the Marxists had to create from a scratch empirical materials and methods of study what in Western countries had been created by bourgeois intellectuals.<sup>31</sup> Mao, therefore, gave as much importance to conceptual innovation as to fact-finding. Opposing dogmatism (i.e. uncritical acceptance of ideas and models), he laid great emphasis on first-hand fact-finding through direct contact with conditions at the grass roots. 'Without investigation no right to speak' was his famous slogan to combat sterile and arm-chair theorising.<sup>32</sup> He directed his party workers to hold fact-finding conferences at all levels. This robust empiricism which Mao introduced in his party was alien to Marxist activists in India. In evolving the Party line for the kisan front for the whole country or for different regions the Indian Marxists seldom mobilised their cadres at different levels for fact-finding campaigns. This gave the Chinese Marxists a rootedness in their social reality which was lacking in the case of the Indian Marxists.

Attention should also be focussed on Mao's attempt to create awareness in the Chinese Communist Party about the scientific nature of Marxism. In countries like India and China where any outstanding individual was quickly elevated into a god and where any teaching tended to become gospel truth (*Ved Vakya*), this emphasis on following a *method* rather than any *ism* or a leader was of tremendous importance. Mao observed that 'Marxism was a science and science is knowledge come by honestly'.<sup>33</sup> He further remarked: 'For the proletariat, there is only one weapon that is the sharpest and most effective, namely, the serious and militant scientific attitude. A Communist lives not upon bluff but upon the truth of Marxism-Leninism, upon the spirit of seeking truth from facts and upon science.'<sup>34</sup> Since there

30. For "Decisions Concerning Differentiation of Class Status in China's Country-side" and "China's Agrarian Reform Law", see, *On the Agrarian Question, A Collection*, National Book Agency, Calcutta, 1969.

31. Mao Tse-tung, "Preface and Postscript to Rural Survey", Vol. 4, People's Publishing House, Bombay, 1954, p. 9.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 52.

were no Universities or Institutes for training cadres in Marxism, Mao tried to make the Party itself into a school for training in the theory and practice of Marxism. Realising that there was no knowledge without literacy and education, he led educational campaigns for the party workers in order to develop a new type of intelligentsia from the worker-peasant masses. This creation of an intelligentsia from the people provided the basis of cross-fertilisation between the Marxian method and the Chinese social reality. This explains the innovativeness of Chinese Marxists in the realm of concepts and social action.

In India the richness, complexity and heterogeneity of Indian rural conditions were never fully grasped by Indian Marxists nor were they adequately reflected in their studies or programmes. Indian Marxists by and large accepted without critical appraisal what Marxists had done in other countries as ready-made framework for their own situation. Their analyses of the Indian agrarian problem therefore were somewhat mechanical and derivative; they were not based on painstaking investigations of agrarian conditions and their variety in a vast country like India.

Last but not the least, Indian Marxists applied the concept of the class struggle somewhat mechanically to an agrarian society like India. They failed to draw upon those Marxist classics (e.g. Vol. III of Marx's *Capital*, Engel's work on *The Peasant War in Germany* and Lenin's studies on the peasant question in Russia) which indicate a creative approach to the study of class structure and which also bring out how the *class* factor is mixed up with or obscured by *non-class* forces and institutions in pre-capitalist agrarian societies. The blindness to the role of religion, family, caste and regionalism and its connexion with the peasant problem remained foreign to the Marxist assessment of the Indian agrarian situation.

It is important to note that even in a classic study like R.P. Dutt's *India Today* the section dealing with the analysis of the agrarian problem does not even mention the tie-up of the agrarian system with the caste system nor does it analyse how the Harijan problem or the tribal problem is linked with the agrarian problem.

The analyses by Indian Marxists failed to correct these serious gaps and deficiencies not only because of methodological inadequacies but also because of lack of adequate contact with rural realities. The Marxist intelligentsia, like other sections of the intelligentsia, were also largely upper class and urban in their origin and social composition and the deep-rooted rural-urban hiatus had its reflection also in the sphere of studies of the agrarian problem.

We draw attention in some detail to these weaknesses because these continued to vitiate the Marxist evaluations of the agrarian problem even in the post-independence period.

MENTION SHOULD NOW be made of the contributions by economic advisers.

and administrators to agrarian study in the later period of the British rule. We do not refer here to the excellent material and economic analyses relating to the agrarian problem in such official reports as the Settlement and Survey Reports, Census Reports, and the various reports submitted by the Commissions and *ad hoc* Committees (like the Central and Provincial Banking Enquiring Committees, the Famine Enquiry Commissions etc.) appointed from time to time by the Central and Provincial governments. We refer here to those scholar-administrators whose work on different aspects of the Indian agrarian system was of a very high order. Harold H. Mann (*Land and Labour in a Deccan Village*, 1917) and M. L. Darling (*Punjab Peasant in Prosperity and Debt*, 1925) contributed deep insights into Indian agriculture and its institutional framework. Darling analysed the inter-relation of the credit and the land system and showed a remarkable perception of the inter-connexions of social and economic life in the Punjab. Some of his observations on future trends proved to be prophetic. The dynamism of rural economy that one witnesses in present-day Punjab was predicted by Darling in the following words: 'In short, it may be said that in the whole of India there is no finer raw material than the Jat . . . it would be difficult in any country to find a more remarkable combination of cultivator, colonist, emigrant and soldier. Educated and organised and relieved of the handicaps imposed upon him by customs and debt, he might well become the foundation of a new rural civilisation in the Punjab.'<sup>35</sup>

Similarly, Harold Mann showed deep understanding of the agricultural situation in India in its manifold connections with the social institutional framework.

For Mann 'the crucial obstacle to [rural progress] was the social one, the institutional framework of Indian agriculture'. Further, 'the peasants' fear' which Mann considered 'justified', was that 'little or none of the benefits of their extra-exertions would accrue to themselves. Any fresh gains were likely to be taken away from them by the landlord, the money-lender, the merchant, or some petty local official. Thus, the fundamental obstacle to the taking up of improvements by the peasants was not technical or narrowly agricultural. It was rather a question of the very foundations of village economy and society.'<sup>36</sup>

Mann deserves to be mentioned also for the fact that he raised important issues pertaining to the methodology of agrarian studies and to the importance of field-work in agricultural economic research. One of the most profound observations by Mann was on the need of first-hand collection of facts. He said: 'I want to insist on one thing because it is important in

35. M. L. Darling, *The Punjab Peasant in Prosperity and Debt*, Oxford University Press, Madras, 1928, p. 36.

36. Harold H. Mann, *The Social Framework of Agriculture*, Vora & Co. Ltd., Bombay, 1967, p. XXVII.

India. We shall never in this country get beyond vague generalisations with regard to the social and economic conditions of the people unless we face the problem and go and get the facts first-hand for ourselves.<sup>37</sup> From this point of view Mann considered the 'intensive' study of social and economic conditions in *small areas* to be 'the most important contribution to sociology in our time'.<sup>38</sup> Further, commenting on methods of data collection, Mann remarked that 'it is only when the investigator is in touch with the people and is quite familiar with their background that the data obtained are likely to be correct. Inaccurate data are worse, I feel, than no data at all'.<sup>39</sup>

FINALLY, the administrators in the pre-independence period also deserve to be mentioned as initiators of village studies. Thus G. Keatings and Harold J. Mann in Bombay, Gilbert Slater in Madras and E.V. Lucas in the Punjab initiated intensive studies of particular villages.<sup>40</sup>

In the next chapter we deal with the agrarian studies by professional social scientists before independence. However, any one making a comparative appraisal of the work by political activists and administrators on the one hand and professional social scientists on the other cannot but note that the former covered a much wider range of problems and showed a keener perception of some of the most fundamental aspects of India's agrarian problem. Considering this perceptivity of men engaged in practical affairs one is reminded of the famous observation by Alfred Marshall: 'Every agricultural problem has peculiarities of its own; and some side of it can be mastered by shrewd, experienced, alert, instinctive judgement better than by systematic reasoning based on ordered knowledge.'<sup>41</sup>

37. *Ibid.*, p. 18.

38. *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

39. *Ibid.*, pp. 22-23.

40. See, Surendra J. Patel, *Agricultural Labourers in India and Pakistan*, Bibliography, Current Book House, Bombay, 1952, pp. 157-169; Ramkrishna Mukherjee, Chapter VI on Village Studies, *The Sociologist and Social Change in India To-day*, Prentice-Hall of India, New Delhi, 1965.

41. Alfred Marshall, *Industry and Trade*, London, 1919, p. 199f.

### CHAPTER III

#### PROFESSIONALISATION OF AGRARIAN STUDIES

AN ATTEMPT WAS MADE so far to show how agrarian study had its origin in political factors associated first with British rule and later with the rise of Indian nationalism. We must now take note of another major development from the beginning of the twentieth century viz. the professionalisation of social sciences and the emergence of agrarian study as an academic subject. While the first generation of contributors to agrarian studies were mainly government administrators and advisers on the one hand and political activists and agitators on the other, conditions were created from the beginning of the twentieth century for the pursuit of agrarian study by professional social scientists in universities, colleges and institutes of social science research.

In a predominantly agricultural country where the agrarian problem was the hard core of the economic problem, one would have expected social scientists to show wide-ranging interest in this problem from the very beginning in the form of many-sided studies. This did not happen. Nothing brings out the alienation of social science from its indigenous demands as the fact revealed by Nanavati and Anjaria that until 1944 hardly any of our Universities had a Chair in agricultural economics supported by trained staff and adequate facilities.<sup>42</sup> Nor perhaps did any University have a Chair in Rural Sociology in the pre-independence period. This non-responsiveness of social science to the country's needs and demands was due to several reasons. It should be remembered that the origin and growth of social sciences in India was the result of exogenous 'implantation' than of endogenous growth.<sup>43</sup> From the very beginning, therefore, there existed a certain hiatus between the 'inherited predilections' of social sciences on the one hand and the demands of Indian social transformation and development on the other.

The sharpest reflection of this hiatus can be seen in the case of the most important branch of social science viz. economics. The neo-classical economics which was in vogue in Western Universities was not adequate for analysing the structure and functioning of a colonial economy. Nor was it adequate for analysing the structure and functioning of an economy which was still predominantly agricultural on the one hand and pre-capitalist

42. M.B. Nanavati and J.J. Anjaria, *The Indian Rural Problem*, Bombay, 1945.

43. Ralph Pieris, *op. cit.*

on the other.<sup>44</sup> Further, the growth of specialisation in social science in the West had resulted in sharp compartmentalisation between one discipline and another and also between pure and applied branches within the same discipline as in economics. Such compartmentalisation was not helpful for the study of economic problems in India. There was in India hardly any important problem the economic aspect of which could be understood in isolation from, say, the social, the cultural, the psychological, the technological, the political or the geographical aspect. The formal training which an economist acquired in neo-classical economics, therefore, did not give him the necessary orientation and equipment for tackling the problems of the Indian rural economy. As a result of these constraints within the discipline, professionalisation of economics did not automatically stimulate rapid growth of studies on the Indian economic problem in general and the land problem in particular.

The situation was not very much different in the other disciplines like social anthropology and sociology. The research interests of the social anthropologists were conditioned partly by their formal training and partly by the demands of the colonial administration with which many of them were directly or indirectly associated. The professional and the non-professional compulsions of an average social anthropologist led him towards concentrating his attention almost exclusively on the tribes in India. But even in the study of the tribes, the material life of the tribal communities and their relationship to land either did not attract the attention of any anthropologist or was given a subordinate place. In fact, within anthropology, economic anthropology remained a very neglected branch of the discipline.<sup>45</sup> Further, the tribes were studied from a static rather than a dynamic perspective. The problems of drawing them into the mainstream of modern development were seldom the primary concern of the anthropologist. Similarly, when the anthropologist turned his attention to new subjects like the study of the village or the peasants he was led again by his formal training and other compulsions towards concentration mostly on studies of religion, caste and kinship. Again, these studies were not always conducted from the perspective of modern development. Further, a basic assumption underlying many of these studies was that of harmony of interest rather than of conflict of interest among groups. Moreover these subjects were studied in isolation from the economic life or the land relations of the village

44. See, Gunnar Myrdal, *Asian Drama*, Vol. 1, II & III, Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, London, 1968; S.C. Gupta, "Agricultural Economics in India", *International Journal of Agrarian Affairs*, Vol. V, No. 1, December 1966, pp. 1-51.

45. See, Surajit Sinha, "Urgent Problem for Research in Sociology and Social Anthropology in India: Perspective and Suggestions", *Sociological Bulletin*, Vol. XVII, No. 2, 1968, pp. 123-133.

people<sup>46</sup> The development of social anthropology, therefore, did not immediately give an impetus to the studies of land and labour in village India.

Apart from the impediments rooted within the discipline itself, there existed important sociological impediments also to the study of the agrarian problem by social scientists. One of the most important reasons for indifference to or limited interest in agrarian study was the deep chasm between the town and the village. The Indian intelligentsia was more urban than rural in its social origin and composition. As a result of the lack of direct touch with village society and, consequently, the lack of a feel of one's own rural environment there was a tendency to rely for an understanding of the Indian agrarian situation on the conceptions and models borrowed from other countries. This tendency for uncritical borrowing was also strengthened on account of the speculative bent of mind inherited from ossified Brahmanism. Speculation was always considered superior to mundane fact-finding by the intellectual elite. The pressure for empirical enquiries, therefore, arose not so much from indigenous intellectual traditions but from the demands of practical life (e.g. from the colonial government's need for information regarding rural life or the nationalists' need for critique of British rule in terms of the poverty of rural people).

A sharp break was required from both the types of constraints mentioned above in order to prepare the macro-sociological, the theoretical and the empirical ground-work for Indian economic studies. It must be recognised that by and large only those social scientists were able to make this break who were prepared to make a break from both the colonial and the traditionalist standpoints and to develop an anti-colonial and critical perspective in social science.

This intellectual task of re-orienting the professionalisation of social sciences to the needs and requirements of the country was undertaken by a number of scholars in the pre-independence period. These scholars occupy a place in the history of Indian social science not merely as specialists in specific branches but as 'sage' scientists having their impact on Indian social science as a whole. Their contribution was fourfold: (i) to suggest questions reflecting the needs and the demands of the Indian situation; (ii) to formulate more meaningful approaches (e.g. the institutional approach) and to initiate a process of abstraction (i.e. concept and theory-building) keeping the concrete conditions of Indian society in view; (iii) to promote methodical surveys and investigations of Indian economic and social conditions; and (iv) to undertake institution-building and training of social scientists for the fulfilment of the above objectives.]

By undertaking this fourfold task these scholars served not only as

46. Even S.C. Dube's *Indian Village* (1955) which is rightly regarded as a pioneer of village studies in India after independence devotes only about 30 pages in a book of about 250 pages to the economic structure and only eight pages to land and agriculture.

pioneers of a unifying framework of Indian social science but also as the founding fathers of different disciplines in India. Among the scholars in this category the most outstanding were Radhakamal Mukerjee, P.C. Mahalanobis, N.K. Bose, D.N. Majumdar, D.R. Gadgil, D.P. Mukerji, V.K.R.V. Rao, G.S. Ghurye etc.

Among those Indian scholars who contributed to the development of agrarian study at all the four levels of suggesting questions for enquiry, formulating new approaches and concepts, initiating field-work and data collection and training research workers and analysts, the name of Radhakamal Mukerjee is perhaps the most prominent in the pre-independence period.

Mukerjee was a 'renaissance man' in the true sense of the term. A dedicated scholar with a passion for scientific detachment, he was full of sympathy for social action in support of the underdog. Though a pioneer in the field of economic studies he was critical of the isolation of economics from the other branches of social science. He observed that 'the more the economists of the country look at the sociological whole situation, the more will their ideas and programmes be of practical benefit for the nation'.<sup>47</sup> He was all the time emphasising the need for recognising the peculiarities of the Indian socio-economic environment and for re-appraising Western theories and concepts in the light of these peculiarities. Though in full sympathy with the use of new techniques and methods in social and economic analysis, he was always stressing the importance of economics as a *human* science. He was, therefore, conscious of the need of combining a 'scientific' approach with a normative perspective.

The following passage from his introduction to the collection of village surveys entitled *Fields and Farmers of Oudh* is reproduced here because it raises issues which are equally relevant to-day: 'Nowhere has there been greater neglect of the realities of the economic life than in the curriculum of economics of Indian Universities. The Indian student can hardly find in his text-books a description of the economic environment in which he lives. The systems which are built up for him are 'castles in the air'. When he comes out of the University, his theories instead of helping him towards interpretation and concrete achievement are a handicap to him. I believe that this is to a large extent responsible for the fact that we have many social visions and utopias in India and few constructive programmes which the masses can understand and work out for immediate benefit.

'We look upon an Indian School of Economics and Sociology to correct this divorce between the academy and the market place and to relate the social sciences to Indian life and labour. We have also to train our students in the techniques and methods of economic and social investigation of

47. Radhakamal Mukerjee, *Economic Problems of Modern India*, Volume I, Macmillan & Co., London, 1939, p. XVIII.

problems which press us from day to day . . . Above all, we must encourage a rustic outlook among our graduates. The Universities have to give a lead in the rural reconstruction movement.<sup>48</sup>

This attempt to give scientific work a down-to-earth orientation and to relate it to national programmes of development led Mukerjee to explore the specificities of the Indian economy and society. For this he derived support from the institutional approach which he reformulated as 'an institutional theory of economics'. Mukerjee raised the basic issue of the fundamental dissimilarity between the Western and the Indian institutional frameworks of economic activity. The analysis of this dissimilarity involved questions of both *fact* and *value* at the same time.<sup>49</sup> Mukerjee interpreted institutions as concretised expression of definite values. In his view underlying a dissimilarity of institutions was a dissimilarity of values. This entire discussion arose in the background of the disintegrative impact of Western capitalism and its individualistic values on the way of life (institutions and values) of the Oriental countries like India.

Mukerjee's analysis thus brought to the fore the non-individualist, 'communalist' nature of Indian institutions and of the non-individualist values underlying them. He raised the question whether the erosion of non-individualistic institutions and values was inevitable for modern development. In other words, was the full-fledged transition towards Western individualist institutions and values necessary in India? These questions were discussed by Mukerjee in most of his writings. He developed the concept of *rural communalism* as an institutional form of economic activity as well as an integrative normative principle of social life in the East. He conceded that 'rural communalism' was oriented more to social stability than economic growth. 'Communalism', therefore, had to undergo certain modifications to suit the requirements of modern economic growth. He was also aware of the growth of class distinctions within these rural communities and the rural-urban hiatus which threatened rural communalism from both within and without. What he emphasised was that this communalism which was 'built up by the distributive and synthetic instincts of the Eastern peoples' had survived the disintegrative impact of commercialism and of the forces of 'violence and avarice' associated with it. He pleaded that the existence of this 'vigorous and effective discipline of group sentiment' should not be ignored and that 'it supplied us with a powerful lever of economic re-construction as well as a shield armour against disintegrative influences'. He emphasised the necessity 'of an unbiased study of the basic factors in Eastern rural communalism'.<sup>50</sup>

48. Radhakamal Mukerjee (ed.), *Fields and Farmers in Oudh*, Longmans Green & Co., Calcutta, 1929, pp. V and VI.

49. *Ibid.*, p. VII.

50. Radhakamal Mukerjee, *The Borderlands of Economics*, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, 1925, p. 88.

Mukerjee was perhaps the most consistent and ardent exponent in the sphere of social science of an Indian variant of the *narodnik* philosophy. Considering, however, how China has advanced straight towards the institutional form of Rural Communes without passing through an individualistic economic institutional pattern, Mukerjee's emphasis on the reserves of collectivism in the East appears to be not so utopian now as it seemed then in his own lifetime.

At the policy level there are two significant points of departure in Mukerjee's view of the future pattern of the Indian economy. Firstly, as is clear from Mukerjee's Note of Dissent to the *Land Policy* panel of the National Planning Committee (1948), Mukerjee favoured *peasant-agriculture* supported by a cooperative institutional framework for credit, marketing, inputs and irrigation etc. He was the first to propose the idea of fixation of a maximum area of peasant holding. On the question of the relation of agriculture and industrialisation or of the village and the town, Mukerjee opposed subordination of the village to the town and of agriculture to the demands of urban industrialisation. Criticising urban 'parasitism' of the countryside, he believed that an 'inter-dependent system of rural and urban economy and exchange' was necessary 'to maintain the structure of civilisation'. He also observed that 'the rural community movement and the cooperative organisation [were] thus in the forefront of social programmes to arrest the disintegrative effects of urbanism'.<sup>51</sup>

Mukerjee's studies on the agrarian problem—*Land Problems of India* (1935), *Democracies of the East* (1923), *Fields and Farmers of Oudh* (1929), *Economic Problems of Modern India* (1939) and *The Borderlands of Economics* (1925)—are all significant both as scientific studies and as elegant expositions of his philosophy of rural reconstruction in the context of the making of a new culture and civilisation. They also combine a macro-view of the Indian rural situation with a wealth of micro-insights. These studies are also significant for viewing the land problem as a multi-disciplinary problem requiring the aid of economics, sociology, economic and social history, human geography, social ecology, social philosophy, social psychology and social ethics. Mukerjee will always be remembered as a pioneer of a *synthetic* approach.

Mukerjee will also be remembered as the main builder of the Lucknow School of Economics and Sociology, and agrarian study has continued to be one of the important traditions of this School. Many of those trained by Mukerjee are productive in the field of agrarian study even to-day.

Contributions to agrarian study were also made by scholars belonging to the Universities of Calcutta, Madras, Bombay and Allahabad. In 1928 the Royal Commission on Agriculture stressed the need for promoting agricultural economics as a subject of study in the colleges and universities

51. *Ibid.*, p. 115.

of the country. Teaching of agricultural economics gave a further stimulus to agrarian study in many universities. A very significant role in the development of Indian economic studies in the pre-independence period was played by new academic institutions under the leadership of distinguished social scientists. The Indian Statistical Institute, Calcutta and the Gokhale Institute of Economics and Politics, Poona, were two such institutions of national importance which were associated with the names of P.C. Mahalanobis and D.R. Gadgil respectively. P.C. Mahalanobis made an important contribution to agrarian study by providing data on land holdings on the basis of the National Sample Survey. Mahalanobis's contribution was also significant in promoting interdisciplinary collaboration in the Indian Statistical Institute and in giving impetus to quantitative orientation in economics, sociology, anthropology, psychology etc. The sociological studies by Ramkrishna Mukherjee based on an application of the quantitative methods were done in this favourable setting of the Indian Statistical Institute.<sup>52</sup>

D.R. Gadgil contributed to the development of new techniques and methods of village studies through initiation of field investigations. Working on the basis of a wider social science perspective himself, he also promoted such an approach in the Gokhale Institute. Some of the best work on the Indian land problem combining a qualitative approach with a quantitative orientation has therefore come from this Institute.

The Delhi School of Economics as a multi-disciplinary School including economics, sociology, human geography, and agro-economic research, Business Management etc. was formed in the early years of independence under the leadership of V.K.R.V. Rao. Later V.K.R.V. Rao also played a leading role in the formation of agro-economic research centres in different parts of the country for case studies of village economies. In 1959 he established the Institute of Economic Growth which continues to be an important centre of studies in the field of land relations and agricultural development.

In the development of agricultural economics in general and land economics in particular the contribution of the department of economics of the Bombay University is highly significant. This department produced both eminent scholars and efficient organisers of studies in agricultural economics. One of its major contributions has been the setting up of the Indian Society of Agricultural Economics in 1939.<sup>53</sup> The Society and its journal, *The Indian Journal of Agricultural Economics*, have played a significant role in the

52. (i) Ramkrishna Mukherjee, *The Dynamics of a Rural Society*, Akademie-Verlag, Berlin, 1957; (ii) Ramkrishna Mukherjee, *Six Villages of Bengal: A Socio-Economic Survey*, Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, 1958.

53. For details, see (i) *The Indian Society of Agricultural Economics: Retrospect 1939-59*, Indian Society of Agricultural Economics, Bombay, 1959, (ii) M.L. Dantwala, "Progress of Research in Agricultural Economics in India", in J.P. Bhattacharjee (ed.), *Studies in Indian Agricultural Economics*, Indian Society of Agricultural Economics, Bombay, 1958.

development of the discipline.

M.L. Dantwala stands out as one of the finest products of the Bombay school, one who has been eminent both as an analyst and as an organiser in the field of agrarian studies. The Bombay school is also to be mentioned for its attempt to draw upon the discipline of sociology as an aid to agricultural economics in general and land economics in particular. The well-known book on *Rural Sociology in India* edited by A.R. Desai was sponsored by the Indian Society of Agricultural Economics (1958).

Among the major works having a bearing on the agrarian problem contributed by professional social scientists before independence some may be mentioned here. They are: *The Trends of Agriculture and Population in the Ganges Valley* by Birendra Nath Ganguli (1938), *The Indian Rural Problem* by M.B. Nanavati and J.J. Anjaria (1945), *Poverty and Social Change in India* by Tarlok Singh (1945) and *Agricultural Labour Conditions in Northern India* by A.M. Lorenzo (1947).

A number of studies on the agrarian problem were also sponsored by the Indian Society of Agricultural Economics. Mention in particular may be made of: (i) *Land System in Bihar and Land Problems of Gujarat*, (ii) *Problems of Land Tenure and Population in West Bengal*, (iii) *The Economics of Estate Farming* and (iv) *Problems of Small Farmers—Report of an Enquiry into the Problems of Low-Income Farmers in Kodinar Taluka*.

We conclude with some observations on the contribution of some leading Indian social anthropologists and sociologists to economic sociology and economic anthropology in general and agrarian study in particular in the pre-independence period. In the work of N.K. Bose, D.N. Majumdar and many other pioneers one notices a vigorous attempt to re-orient the discipline to the needs of the Indian situation. This attempt is to be noticed on the plane of both methodology, analysis and data collection. N.K. Bose in his book *Cultural Anthropology* (1929) posed the question how the economic and non-economic aspects of life were related to one another and he was perhaps one of the very few leading anthropologists who tried to explore economic basis of the institutions like caste system. The study of the material culture occupies in his study as important a place as the study of social institutions and non-material culture.<sup>54</sup> He was also one of the few who introduced a new premise in social anthropology—the premise of the unity of *understanding* and *social action*. Moreover, the wider perspective that Bose acquired through his identification with Indian nationalism and his association with Gandhiji enabled him to utilise anthropological study as a medium of promoting national awakening and social consciousness.

Similarly, D.N. Majumdar also tried to pull anthropology in India out of its narrow grooves and to draw it into the mainstream of national life. He

54. N.K. Bose, "Experiences in Cultural Enquiries", *Man in India*, Vol. 52, No. 3, July-September, 1972, pp. 201-211.

viewed his role as a social anthropologist in the wider perspective of national reconstruction and 'social engineering'.<sup>55</sup> Moreover, in his study of the tribal and the rural communities he explored both the material and non-material aspects of culture and also to some extent their interaction. A glance at the list of his writings provides abundant proof of his concern with economic life of the tribes and the rural communities and his interest in the development of economic anthropology.

However, in spite of the groundwork done by Bose, Majumdar and many others the study of the economic structure in general and of agrarian social structure in particular did not develop into a major branch of Indian anthropology in the pre-independence period. In fact, anthropology was one of those disciplines in India where the lag between the concerns of anthropologists and the needs of Indian nation was most pronounced.

The reasons for this lag were quite fundamental. One of the major reasons was perhaps the close identification of Indian anthropology with the colonial administration which distorted its growth and development. After the colonial administration abandoned its interest in the agrarian structure, it was not willing to finance enquiries into this problem and to allow them to be conducted by non-official agencies. Since anthropology is dependent more than any other discipline on field work the financial constraint itself was an inhibiting factor in promoting independent research. The influence of colonialism on Indian anthropology was also exercised in a more basic manner. Anthropology as a discipline arose itself as an aid to colonial powers in their 'management' of the non-White populations in the colonies. The anthropologist therefore seldom questioned colonialism or its legitimacy. Anything which could even remotely suggest a critique of colonialism was outside the scope of social anthropology. Thus while the most important problem faced by India was that of colonialism to which every other problem was related, this was outside the scope of social anthropology in view of its original tie-up with colonialism. In other words, professional prestige and respectability in social anthropology were not associated with those questions (e.g. the structure of the tribal and the peasant economy under the impact of the colonial economy) which were most relevant to the Indian society. This factor was a major deterrent to any sustained enquiry into these questions by the anthropologists in the colonial countries.

The indifference of the anthropologist to economic questions in general and agrarian question in particular can be understood in another way in the light of sociology of knowledge. Such indifference served the ideological needs of both colonialism and traditionalism. For different reasons both were interested in perpetuating the myth of Indian exceptionalism and of the non-materialist character of Indian people. And no other factor was

55. See, T.N. Madan, "Dhirendra Nath Majumdar (1903-1960)", *Biographical Memoirs of Fellows of National Institute of Sciences in India*, Vol. I, 1966, p. 174.

capable of delivering a greater blow to such myths as an investigation into the colonial impact on the economic structure of tribal and peasant society in different regions. And no other factor has sustained this myth so much as the exclusive pre-occupation with the non-economic relations of the rural people. Consequently, without taking an integrated view of the economic and non-economic relations and without adopting explicitly the premise of the potentialities of revolutionary transformation in colonial and semi-colonial societies, Indian anthropology as a discipline continued to operate within the ideological constraints of colonialism and traditionalism in the pre-independence period.

From the foregoing survey of agrarian study before independence we wish to highlight the insights that it provides into some aspects of the development of social sciences and into the sociology of knowledge. The survey illustrates that the growth of knowledge in human sciences in India cannot just be equated with the progress of professionalisation. The most favourable context for the growth of scientific study of the agrarian question is created when sensitivity to the demands of an anti-colonial and anti-feudal transformation is combined with logical rigour and methodological sophistication. Either the political activist having social sensitivity himself acquires to some extent the skills of a professional social scientist. Or the latter is able to combine technical competence with social sensitivity. India did produce individuals of both types, though not traditions of both types to an adequate extent. If the 'intellectual' or 'scientific' element was weaker among political activists as a whole, the element of social sensitivity was weaker among professional social scientists.

Why professionalisation without an anti-colonial and anti-feudal awareness does not stimulate the growth of scientific knowledge is an important question thrown up by this survey. And the survey itself suggests an answer to this question. In countries like India scientific enquiry can be undertaken either from the perspective of merely studying the people as an *object* of history or from the perspective of activating the people as the *subject* of history.

The questions which are relevant for scientific enquiry from the former perspective are quite different from the questions which are relevant from the latter perspective. It is in this sense that the direction of social science research is not independent of the influence of ideological trends reflecting the conflicts of interests during a given period. It is no accident therefore that a deeper scientific exploration of the agrarian question has been closely connected with the deepening of an anti-colonial and anti-feudal consciousness among the intelligentsia.

It should also be noted that certain branches of social science like anthropology were the direct outcome of a historical process of colonialism

under which 'one part of mankind treated another as an object'.<sup>56</sup> This explains why the lack of an anti-colonial and anti-feudal consciousness was the most pronounced in anthropology in the pre-independence period. And anthropology for this very reason was also less responsive to the study of the agrarian social structure in general and peasant economy in particular. As we shall see later, this weakness of an anthropological base or the poverty of anthropological data and insights on the inter-relation of the colonial and the peasant economy constituted one of the basic sources of the weakness of peasant studies by economists in India.

56. C. Levi-Strauss, "Anthropology: Its Achievements and Future", *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 7, No. 2, April 1966, pp. 125-126.

## SECTION II

### Agrarian Studies After Independence

#### CHAPTER IV

#### GENERAL VIEW

THE LAND QUESTION emerged as an important area of economic research after 1947. The reasons for this new importance given to the land question lay outside the field of economics. A review of agrarian research since independence confirms the validity of what Myrdal has said about the stimulating influence of politics on the development of economics: 'Rarely, if ever, has the development of economics by its own force blazed the way to new perspectives. The cue to the continual reorientation of our work has come from the sphere of politics; responding to that cue, students turn to research on issues that have attained political importance. Theories are launched, data collected and the literature on the "new" problems expands.'<sup>57</sup>

Among the political factors favouring agrarian research, the most important was India's emergence as an independent nation. Indian independence, however, was itself a part of the wider process of the breakdown of the colonial system in the world following the end of the Second World War. This process of decolonisation was also accompanied by an unprecedented anti-feudal upsurge in the newly-independent countries of Asia, Latin America and Africa.<sup>58</sup>

The anti-colonial awakening in these countries was now transformed into an urge for rapid economic development and social progress. The national leaders in these countries were in search of new paths to prosperity for the people through an effective use of the newly-won state power. Since the peasantry constituted a major anti-colonial force in most of these countries in the period of the nationalist struggle, land reforms for the emancipation of the peasantry from feudal burdens became a necessary part of the process of national planning for economic development. That the Occupational Forces were compelled to take an active part in the implementation of a sweeping agrarian reform programme in countries like Japan and Taiwan was a pointer to the compulsions of the new epoch which began with the end of the colonial era.

During the colonial era the dominant opinion in Western capitalist

57. Gunnar Myrdal, *Asian Drama*, Vol. I, p. 9.

58. E.H. Jocoby, *Agrarian Unrest in South-East Asia*, Asia Publishing House, London, 1961.

countries was indifferent to the question of land reforms in the colonies and semi-colonies. It is the Russian Revolution and the new Soviet Republic which provided the necessary ideological inspiration for land reforms to the nationalist fighters in the colonies and semi-colonies.<sup>59</sup> In the new epoch, however, land reforms came to be recognised as a fundamental condition for economic development of the newly liberated countries even by the political leaders and social scientists of the Western capitalist countries.<sup>60</sup> A major indication of this was provided by the two U.N. Reports, one on *Measures for the Economic Development of Underdeveloped Countries* (1951) and the other on *Defects in Agrarian Structure as Obstacles to Economic Development* (1951). The first report was prepared by five specialists including T.W. Schultz.

The changed political landscape and balance of forces in the world after the Second War gave a major shake-up to all the different branches of social science. The fact that the Third World was now trying to explore new paths and strategies for modern development called for a re-examination of some of the basic assumptions underlying economic, social and political theory which represented mostly a rationalisation of the Western experience.<sup>61</sup> Even though this re-examination was the most pronounced in economics, the subject of under-development and development emerged as a major concern not only for economics but for social science as a whole including sociology and political science. Since the problem of development could not be analysed by economics without the aid of other disciplines, in many cases economists themselves turned into sociologists or political scientists for an understanding of this problem. This new situation gave an impetus to institutional economics and a new type of macro-economics which was very different from neo-classical economics. In sociology also a new trend of macro-sociological analysis was initiated.

A revival of theoretical interest in institutional questions was an important part of this exploration into the problem of development. And the question of changing the institutional framework of traditional agriculture or the question of land reforms acquired an important place in this discussion. Every major work on development economics gave an important place to the question of the agrarian structure. W. Arther Lewis's *Theory of Economic Growth* (1954), Paul A. Baran's *Political Economy of Growth* (1957), Gunnar Myrdal's *Economic Theory and Underdeveloped Regions* (1954) and many other analyses discussed the role of the agrarian structure as a factor in economic development and posed important questions for enquiry and

59. See, V.I. Lenin, *The National Liberation Movements in the East*, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1962, p. 255.

60. See, Chester Bowles, *Making of a Just Society*, University of Delhi, Delhi, 1963.

61. See, (i) Gunnar Myrdal, *Economic Theory and the Underdeveloped Regions*, pp. 110-116, Indian Edition, 1968. (ii) A.O. Hirschman, *The Strategy of Economic Development*, Yale University Press, 1958.

investigation. Land reforms thus emerged as an enormously important issue for theoretical discussion and empirical investigation. This new interest in land reforms was reflected at the scientific level in an examination of the question of reform of the agrarian structure by Doreen Warriner in her lectures on *Land Reform and Economic Development* (1955).

In India the question of land reforms assumed a high priority at the policy-making level immediately after the formation of independent governments both at the Centre and in the States. The agrarian upheavals in different parts of the country, including the famous Telengana revolt and the Tebhaga movement, on the eve of the transfer of power made land reforms an issue of urgent discussion, deliberation and action at the highest political and governmental levels. In fact, very soon after independence there emerged three major agrarian theses and, based on them, three blue-prints for political action relating to the land problem. These were contributed by three major political trends in the country.

(i) In 1949 the *Congress Agrarian Reforms Committee*, a high-level body appointed by the President of the Indian National Congress, released its *Report* which presented an analysis of the agrarian problem in India and also a programme of land reforms within the parliamentary-democratic framework. This Report was a major policy document which provided the guiding principles for agrarian policy to be followed by all Congress governments in the country.

(ii) In 1948 the Communist Party of India adopted a new *Political Thesis* at its Second Congress at Calcutta which put forward the slogan of *land to the tiller* and the strategy of militant mobilisation of the peasants for an agrarian revolution. This basic thesis was further elaborated in a major policy document called *On the Agrarian Question in India*<sup>62</sup> in the same year.

(iii) Again in 1948 some of the followers of Mahatma Gandhi also made a major policy decision under the leadership of Vinoba Bhave to launch the *Sarvodaya* movement which, a year later, assumed the form of the well-known *Bhoodan-Gramdan* movement.

These were not only three major programmes for social action but also three diagnoses of and approaches to the land problem. Those responsible for formulating them were guided not merely by their intuition and political instinct. They also tried to seek a theoretical basis for these experiments in land reforms. Therefore, in all the three cases, an attempt was made to associate social scientists with this work. Also, the leaders themselves tried to draw upon social and economic theory for this work. The *Congress Agrarian Reforms Committee*, for instance, had among its members one of the most distinguished economists, M.L. Dantwala, who played a major role in

62. Communist Party of India, *On the Agrarian Question in India*, People's Publishing House, Bombay, 1949.

preparing its Report. He was responsible for the conceptual and analytical framework of this Report on the basis of which it recommended the adoption of peasant farming assisted by cooperative organisation. The Committee suggested a lower as well as an upper limit to peasant farming. Similarly, in preparing the agrarian thesis of the Communist Party the major role was played by Bhowani Sen, the Marxist expert on the agrarian question. Drawing upon Lenin's approach to the agrarian problem, Bhowani Sen showed how *the land to the tiller* programmes could not be achieved unless there was a simultaneous attack on feudalism inherited from the past and on capitalist landlordism fast emerging in the present. Apart from emphasising the necessity of a political revolution which would decisively change the balance of power in favour of the peasants, he emphasised the role of economic measures to achieve this political objective. In his view abolition of landlordism by itself was not enough unless it was reinforced by other measures to break the monopoly of land which was earlier in the hands of the feudal landlords and may now shift to capitalist landlords and rich peasants. He put forward the idea of nationalisation of land for this purpose.

Finally, in Vinoba Bhave's *Bhoodan-Gramdan movement*, a leading role was played by intellectually-oriented leaders like Jayaprakash Narayan and other social scientists of the Institute for Gandhian Studies, Varanasi. Vinoba Bhave's movement had as its intellectual basis the Gandhian theory of trusteeship. It was an attempt to solve the land problem within the Indian traditions of 'rural communalism' by urging through social pressure the landed classes to voluntarily surrender a part of their land for the landless of the village. This movement could even be interpreted as a revival of the traditional Indian practice of periodical redistribution of land to cope with the problems of a changing society.

It should be repeated that the three theses summarised above were the initiators of three major movements for changing the agrarian structure. They also inaugurated an era of scientific research and public debate on the various issues pertaining to a change in the agrarian structure. What needs emphasis is that the question of agrarian reforms and the numerous issues connected with this larger question were first raised and articulated in the arena of politics and not in the campus of professional social science. Politics thus provided stimulation directly and indirectly to agrarian research. The demands of the wider social and political processes and the intellectual responses to them assumed the following major forms.

A. As land reforms became a politically important issue, it was taken up for study and research by some professional social scientists. The political importance of land reforms induced a number of research students to offer this subject for their Ph.D. dissertations in different Universities. It is just not a matter of accident that the study of the land question by a number of social scientists coincided with the intense public debate on this question

since independence. In this way a number of valuable studies on land reforms were contributed by social scientists without these studies being directly sponsored by any official agency. Some of them were of direct interest to the policy-makers. Others were undertaken for an understanding of the Indian agrarian structure in the context of the wider social structure and the processes of social change.

Among these contributions on the land question it is appropriate to mention Surendra J. Patel's *Agricultural Labourers in Modern India and Pakistan* (1952), Daniel Thorner's *Agrarian Prospect in India* (1956) and *Land and Labour in India* (1961), C.H. Shah's *Problems of Small Farmers—Report on an Enquiry into the Problem of Low-income Farmers in Kodinar Taluka* (1956), the Presidential Address on *Land Reforms* to Indian Society of Agricultural Economics by D.R. Gadgil (1954) and on *Agrarian Structure and Economic Development* by M.L. Dantwala (1961), Karuna Mukherji's *Land Reforms* (1952), Baljit Singh's *Next Step in Village India* (1960), P.C. Joshi's *Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Change in Uttar Pradesh* (1955), 'Land Reforms in India' (1961) and 'Land Reform and Agrarian Change in India and Pakistan Since 1947' (1971), Baudhayan Chattopadhyaya's 'Agricultural Labour, Enterprise and Land Reforms in India' (1959), A.M. Khusro's *An Analysis of Agricultural Land in India by Size of Holding and Tenure* (1961), and *The Economics of Land Reforms and Farm Size* (1973), Raj Krishna's 'Some Aspects of Land Reforms and Economic Development in India' (1961), Dandekar's 'Economic Theory and Agrarian Reform' (1962), S.C. Gupta's *India's Agrarian Structure* (1966), Tarlok Singh's *Poverty and Social Change* (1969), K.N. Raj's *Ownership and Distribution of Land* (1970), B.S. Minhas's 'Rural Poverty, Land Distribution and Development', (*Indian Economic Review*, April 1970), G. Parthasarathy's 'Employment Implications of Green Revolution and Policy Alternatives' (1972), J.N. Sinha's 'Agrarian Reform and Employment in Densely Populated Agrarian Economies' (1973), and Amit Bhaduri's 'A Study in Agricultural Backwardness Under Semi-Feudalism' (1973).

The response of the sociologists and social anthropologists to agrarian study was not so marked as that of the economists. But some contributions by them deserve mention. They are: Ramkrishna Mukherjee's *The Dynamics of a Rural Society* (1957), E. Kathleen Gough's 'Social Structure of a Tanjore Village' (1955) and 'Caste in a Tanjore Village' (1960), Scarlet Epstein's *Economic Development and Social Change in South India* (1962), T.K. Oommen's 'Agrarian Tension in a Kerala District—An Analysis' (1971) and *Charisma, Stability and Change—An Analysis of Bhoodan-Gramdan Movement in India* (1972), and Andre Beteille's *Studies in Agrarian Social Structure* (1973). The most serious gap was the lack of response from political scientists to the question of land reforms.

An important feature of the land studies was the crucial role played in it by distinguished scholars from outside India. Among them Daniel Thorner

was virtually the pioneer of a new method of agrarian study among economists. Wolf Ladejinsky is another expert also with experience of land reform schemes in many countries. Two Soviet scholars who deserve mention are Grigori Kotovsky (*Agrarian Reform in India*) and Victor Rastvannikov (*Agrarian Capitalism in a Multi-Structural Society, The Experience of Independent India*).

Land reforms was also an important subject of discussion at professional conferences and seminars of social scientists. Among these the most important were: (i) the Twenty-First Conference of the Indian Society of Agricultural Economics in 1961 having 'Land Reform Legislation and its Implementation in Different States' as one of the subjects for discussion; (ii) The All-India Seminar on *India's Social Situation* at the Indian Statistical Institute, Calcutta in 1969 having agrarian situation as one of the themes for discussion; and (iii) the All-India Seminar on *Political Economy of Indian Agriculture* at Calcutta in 1973.

Having taken note of the spontaneous reorientation of social science research in favour of the land question, it may be well to remember that the role of such non-sponsored research was far less important than that of the officially sponsored research which is discussed in the next section.

B. It should be noted that the governments at the Centre and in the States tried to associate social scientists with the evaluation of land reforms and their implementation. The Research Programmes Committee of the Planning Commission entrusted eminent scholars in the different Universities and research Institutes with this task of scientific evaluation by offering financial assistance for this purpose. This programme of research sponsored by the government resulted in a spurt of land reforms evaluation studies. Important among these land reforms studies are: A.M. Khusro's *Economic and Social Effects of Jagirdari Abolition and Land Reforms in Hyderabad* (1958), Dandekar and Khudanpur's *Working of Bombay Tenancy Act 1948* (1957), Kolhatkar and Mahabal's *An Enquiry into the Effects of the Working of the Tenancy Legislation in the Borada District of Bombay State* (1958), B.R. Misra's *Effects of Land Reforms in Saurashtra* (1961), Sarveshwara Rao's *The Economic and Social Effects of Zamindari Abolition in Andhra* (1963), Basu and Bhattacharya's *A Study on Implementation of Land Reforms in West Bengal* (1963), Baljit Singh and S.D. Misra's *A Study of Land Reforms in Uttar Pradesh* (1964), Dool Singh's *A Study of Land Reforms in Rajasthan* (1964), G. Parthasarathy and B. Prasada Rao's *Implementation of Land Reforms in Andhra Pradesh* (1969), K.R. Nanekar's *Land Reforms in Vidarbha* (1966), K.S. Sonachalam's *Land Reforms in Tamilnadu* (1970), M.B. Desai's *Tenancy Abolition and the Emerging Pattern in Gujarat* (1971), N.C. Dutta's *Land Problems and Land Reforms in Assam* (1968), and M.L. Dantwala and C.H. Shah's *Evaluation of Land Reforms* (1971).

The Planning Commission also took the initiative in inviting the renowned expert on land reforms, Wolf Ladejinsky, to undertake *A Study on Tenurial*

*Conditions in Package Districts* (1965) which stimulated a lot of thinking on the relation of tenurial conditions and production programmes.

In 1969 the Union government appointed the National Commission on Agriculture for making analyses and policy recommendations on all important aspects of Indian agriculture including land reforms. This is a major collaborative enterprise of the politicians, administrators and social scientists in recent years. *The Working Group on Land Reforms* appointed by the Commission is preparing its report on the basis of field visits and secondary materials available on this question. It has already submitted an *Interim Report on the Imposition of Ceilings on Land Holdings* (1972) which has been very widely discussed.

The role of the Government was twofold: it sponsored research and also undertook several all-India surveys on various aspects of the problem which have served as rich sources of data for agrarian study. *The All-India Rural Credit Survey*, *The Debt and Investment Survey*, *The All-India Labour Enquiry*, *The National Sample Survey on Land Holdings*, the case studies on rural change undertaken by the eight agro-economic research centres, the *Farm Management Studies* undertaken by various research centres set up for this purpose and the various surveys undertaken by the Programme Evaluation Organisation from time to time need special mention in this respect.

The chapters on Land Reforms in the reports of the First, Second, Third and Fourth Plans, and the two reports on *Progress of Land Reforms* (1963) and *Implementation of Land Reforms* (1966) providing both information and analyses were the other important contributions to agrarian study by the Land Reforms Division of the Planning Commission, Government of India. Also noteworthy are the three Seminars, one on *Land Reforms* sponsored by the Planning Commission in 1966, the second on *Agrarian Structure* sponsored by Mussoorie Academy of Administration in 1972 and the third on *Land Reforms in the Eastern Region of India* sponsored jointly by the Mussoorie Academy and the A.N. Sinha Institute of Social Studies in 1972. These provided opportunities for valuable exchange of information and ideas on land reforms policy, on its implementation and also on priority areas of research in this field. The 1966 Seminar is important for the discussion on the question of methodology of land reforms studies. Another notable contribution on the question of methodology was the *Report of the Working Group of the Government of India and the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations on Methods for Evaluation of Effects of Agrarian Reforms* (1958).

Other governmental institutions which need to be mentioned for their role in promoting research and in providing data on agrarian issues are: *The Anthropological Survey of India* (ASI), the *National Institute of Community Development* (NICD) and the *Agricultural Universities* in the Punjab, U.P., etc. The ASI earlier under the leadership of N.K. Bose and later under Surajit Sinha and the NICD under S.C. Dube accorded an important place

to economic questions in their research programmes.

C. In the third category are included the contributions of those leaders and activists of the political parties who were essentially intellectuals and who tried to analyse various aspects of the land problem. Even though they were not professional social scientists, their contribution to agrarian study was very substantial. In fact, their analyses offered insights into certain politico-economic and social aspects of the land question which were lacking in the work of professional social scientists. Some important contributions in this category are: E.M.S. Namboodiripad's *On the Agrarian Question in India* (1952) and *Economics and Politics of the Socialist Pattern* (1966), H.D. Malaviya's *Land Reforms in India* (1954), Bhowani Sen's *Indian Land System and Land Reforms* (1955) and *Evolution of Agrarian Relations in India* (1962), Charan Singh's *Abolition of Zamindari* (1947), *Cooperative Farming X-Rayed* (1961) and *Agrarian Revolution in Uttar Pradesh* (1957), P. Sundarayya's *Telangana People's Struggle and its Lessons* (1972), Sunil Sen's *Agrarian Struggles in Bengal* (1972), Vinoba Bhave's *From Bhoodan to Gramdan* (1957), and Jayaprakash Narayan's 'The Land Grabbers' (1970) and *Face to Face* (1971).

D. The Central and State governments began to play a strategic role in the field of land reforms after independence. Consequently, there emerged from among the administrators themselves a number of distinguished experts on land reforms and specially on the implementation aspects. Some of these experts also played an important role in promoting research and in providing an effective link between the government and the social scientists. We mention here only some outstanding names from the field of administration. The first important name is that of Ameer Raza who was responsible for drafting the *U.P. Zamindari Abolition Committee Report* (1948). This Report served as a model for many other State governments. Later Ameer Raza played an important role as Head of the Land Reforms Division of the Planning Commission. Asok Mitra is another civil servant who played a leading role in reorienting the Indian Census to the demands of social science research after independence. Another contribution by him is in the form of the excellent analysis of the agrarian problems provided in West Bengal Census Report, 1951. S.R. Sen, the author of *Strategy for Agricultural Development and other Essays on Economic Policy and Planning* (1962), played an important role in promoting research through the Directorate of Economics and Statistics and the Agro-Economic Research Centres and later as an official of the Planning Commission. The two important volumes on *Land Reforms: Abolition of Intermediaries* (1953) and *Land Reforms: Reforms in Tenancy* (1955) containing both information and analyses were prepared by the Land Economics Division under his guidance as Economic and Statistical Adviser to the Union Ministry of Food and Agriculture. Another important name among senior administrators who attaches great value to social science research on the land problem and stimulated such research in

various ways is that of B. Sivaraman, Member, Planning Commission and Vice-Chairman, National Commission on Agriculture. His keynote address on 'Agrarian Structure and its Problems'<sup>63</sup> to the Mussoorie Academy Seminar (1973) and his lecture on 'Scientific Agriculture is Neutral to Scale—The Fallacy and the Remedy'<sup>64</sup> deserve special mention.

D. Bandopadhyaya, a West Bengal official, contributed a number of perceptive papers and reports on the agrarian structure of West Bengal and on implementation of land reforms. His paper on 'Indra Lohar and the Due Process of Law'<sup>65</sup> deserves mention as a new type of case study of the implementation problems of land reforms. He played an important role as Director of Land Records in West Bengal in supervising the implementation of land reforms.

Similarly, P.S. Appu, present Land Reforms Commissioner at the Centre, contributed an important study on Land Ceiling (1971) which was adopted as a basis of discussion by the Central Land Reforms Committee in making recommendations on the issue of land ceilings. The recent document of the Planning Commission entitled *Report of the Task Force on Agrarian Relations* (1973) was also prepared under his chairmanship. This document deserves mention for its frank and forthright observations on the political obstacles to the implementation of land reforms.

The role of the administrators was also very significant in highlighting new areas of research generally ignored by social scientists. For instance, it was the Research and Policy Division of the Union Ministry of Home Affairs which took the initiative in preparing the well-known report on *The Causes and Nature of Current Agrarian Tension* (1969).

The purpose here is not to present a full list of the names of administrative experts on land reforms. It is only to highlight the contribution of this category to agrarian study in recent years.

E. The contribution of another category, viz. the journalists, to agrarian study deserves to be noted. If the political process has a decisive role in influencing priorities and the direction of research, the journalists always have been the first to react to new social developments and demands and to articulate them through the daily and the weekly press. Their accounts of rural problems based on direct observation have sometimes yielded such valuable insights as have eluded the more sophisticated studies by social scientists. One of the outstanding names is that of Kusum Nair whose book *Blossoms in the Dust* (1961) evoked much greater interest than any work by

63. B. Sivaraman, "Keynote Address", *Journal of the Lal Bahadur Shastri Academy of Administration*, Vol. XVII, No. 4, Winter 1973.

64. B. Sivaraman, "Scientific Agriculture is Neutral to Scale—The Fallacy & The Remedy", *26th Annual Conference, Indian Society of Agricultural Statistics*, Kalyani, Dec., 27, 1972.

65. D. Bandopadhyaya, "Indra Lohar and the Due Process of Law", Land Record Division, Govt. of West Bengal, December 1972.

a social anthropologist or agricultural economist. Sivadas Banerjee's articles in *The Times of India* on the agrarian situation in West Bengal from time to time, Chand Joshi's *The Roots of Revolution*<sup>66</sup> (1971) on the agrarian roots of Naxalism, S.C. Kala's reportage on the U.P. agrarian problems and Asok Thapar's articles on the Punjab country-side after the Green Revolution are further illustrations of the contribution by journalists to the understanding of the many-sided nature of the agrarian problem. Perhaps the most significant since independence has been the contribution of *The Economic and Political Weekly* (earlier called *The Economic Weekly*) in promoting thinking and study of Indian economic problems including the agrarian problem. In the recent period its *Survey of Agriculture* published four times in a year has stimulated a periodic review of the agrarian situation in India. Similarly, the magazine *Seminar* edited by Romesh Thapar has made a notable contribution by conducting a public debate on various aspects of the land problem in a number of its issues. Also important are political journals and magazines like the *A.I.C.C. Economic Review*, *Socialist India*, *Yojana*, *Kurukshetra*, *New Age*, *People's Democracy*, *Social Scientist*, *Mainstream*, *Indian Left-Review*, *Janta*, *Link*, *Khadi Gramodyog* etc. as sources of information and for analyses of agrarian issues.

F. Among the non-academic institutions and agencies the role of private organisations also need a brief comment. The all-India institutions representing business groups like the *Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry* and *The Forum of Free Enterprise* have not played much significant role either in promoting research or any awareness about the importance of land reforms. In fact, the stand taken by these institutions has been explicitly against radical measures like ceiling on the land holdings. They have also advocated measures like permission to joint stock companies to undertake production of foodgrains and commercial crops. Mention should be made of two Seminars sponsored by the FICCI, one on *Agricultural Development and Economic Progress* (1964) and another on *Economic Growth Through Agriculture-Industry Interdependence* (1967). Some of the publications of the *Forum of Free Enterprise* are also worthy of mention like *For Freedom, Farm and Family* (1959). Another non-official agency was the *Indian Cooperative Union*, which brought out several publications on problems of cooperation in agriculture. The most noted of its publications was *Cooperative Farming: Some Critical Reflections* by Raj Krishna and L.C. Jain (1956).

G. Last but not the least, the role of international academic and non-academic agencies in promoting research on land reforms in India should be noted. Among the agencies of the *United Nations*, the most important from the standpoint of land reform is the *Food and Agriculture Organisation*.

66. Chand Joshi, "The Roots of Revolution", *The Hindustan Times*, Sunday World, Nov. 7 and Nov. 14, 1971.

We have already mentioned the report submitted by the FAO team to the Government of India on methods of evaluating land reforms. The reports published by the FAO on *Progress of Land Reform* have also exercised a stimulating influence on the government agencies and the research institutions. The *U.N. Report of a Community Development Mission in India (1959)* which included M. Read, Rene Dumont and M.J. Coldwell also raises the question of land reforms. Among consultants from outside the country, a very crucial role has been played by Wolf Ladejnsky in stimulating Indian scholars in the field of land reforms and in creating an awareness of the necessity of land reforms among the policy-makers. It should be noted, however, that institutions like the World Bank, The Ford Foundation and other foreign agencies have not generally accorded an important place to the question of land reforms in research promotion programmes even though they have not taken an anti-land reforms position. Much greater priority, however, was given by them in research programmes to studies of Community Development and the Green Revolution than to studies of the agrarian structure.

In short, India's independence from foreign rule inaugurated an era of thinking, research and public debate on the agrarian question and specially on the question of land reforms. This was, indeed, part of the thinking, research and public debate on the wider question of economic growth and socio-political transformation in India. Even though the initiative for this process came initially from outside the scientific sphere, namely, the political arena, one can discern a growingly important role played in it by the professional social scientists after independence.

In his essay on 'The Relation between Social Theory and Social Policy'<sup>67</sup> Myrdal has made a distinction between the two different ways in which social scientists influenced social policy in the Western countries. In the earlier period there was 'little participation on the part of social scientists in the actual technical preparation of the legislation and still less in administering induced social changes but their influence was due in the main to their exposition and propagation of certain general thoughts and theories'. In the later period, however, the role of social scientists and particularly economists as experts and aides to administration assumed greater importance.

In India before independence the role of social scientists was more significant as social and economic analysts than as technical experts assisting governments. After independence, however, the social scientists, particularly economists, acquired very great influence and respectability as experts and technical aides to governments on matters relating to planning and economic policy. For more than a decade or so this factor overshadowed the

67. Gunnar Myrdal, "The Relation Between Social Theory and Social Policy", *British Journal of Sociology*, IV (3), September 1953.

other and perhaps the more important role of the social scientists as social, economic and political analysts. In the more recent past, however, there has been some disenchantment with the role of the social scientist as a mere aide to the policy-maker and consequently a greater demand on the social scientist as a critical analyst of the structure and processes of a changing society. The social scientist is thus required to work not merely as a technical expert working under the assumptions provided by the policy-makers. He is also required to evaluate or question those assumptions in the light of his understanding of the forces and compulsions arising from the interaction of technology, class structure, politics, culture, past traditions etc. in a developing society. *One of the major findings of our survey of research on land reforms in India is that social scientists have not so far been able to contribute critical and comprehensive studies of the latter type.* This is a serious gap in agrarian studies which explains the absence of an adequate perspective of agrarian reconstruction in India.

In the following pages we shall be concerned with an examination of the response of social scientists to the important issues relating to the land question in India after independence. The response of the social scientists was not the same in relation to all important issues. Some issues led to considerable thinking, research and debate among social scientists and some others were largely ignored by them. What explains the enthusiastic response of social scientists to some issues and indifference to others is an important question which needs to be explored by social scientists themselves. It is also necessary to evaluate the nature of response to issues which attracted their attention. In particular it is necessary to evaluate the social content and technical quality of this response.

In the remaining part of this report we shall take up some of these questions for examination. It should be pointed out that in this research survey we are not taking up all the important aspects of agrarian studies for evaluation. An exhaustive and critical appraisal of evaluation studies on land reform legislation and its implementation was first presented by V.M. Dandekar in *Artha Vijnana* (IV, No. 4, December 1962). These studies were also appraised later by some other economists on different occasions. We shall therefore highlight only some of the important problems concerning the process of implementation of land reforms which deserve further study. Similarly, the studies on questions of tenancy and resource allocation, on farm size and productivity and on efficiency and feasibility of cooperative farming etc. have also been evaluated by many economists. An exhaustive survey of these has been presented by S.C. Jha under the title 'A Critical Analysis of Indian Land Reform Studies' in the *Quarterly Journal of Indian Studies in Social Science* (Jan-June 1970). Earlier some evaluation of research in the field of land economics was also done by H. Jagdish Bhagwati and S. Chakravarty in their 'Contributions to Indian Economic Analysis' in the *American Economic Review* (Vol. XIX, No. 4, Part 2, September,

1969).

We shall, therefore, be concerned in the remaining part of the report with only such aspects of the land question as have not received adequate attention. It would be our special endeavour to highlight the socio-political factors which have influenced the scope and direction of agrarian research after independence.

The survey of agrarian study after independence has been done with reference to the following broad themes:

- (i) Agrarian reconstruction and the processes and patterns of modernisation.
- (ii) Agrarian structure and economic development.
- (iii) Evaluation of land reforms.
- (iv) Less explored areas in agrarian study.

## CHAPTER V

### AGRARIAN RECONSTRUCTION AND THE PROCESSES AND PATTERNS OF MODERNISATION

WE TAKE UP first the study of the problems of agrarian reconstruction in India from the wider perspective of modernisation of a semi-feudal and ex-colonial society. It may be stated at the very outset that this is perhaps the subject most neglected by the Indian social scientists. This will become clear when it is realised that there are, broadly speaking, two ways of studying the agrarian question. This question can be examined either with a narrow focus on economic growth including growth of agriculture, or from the wider standpoint of the institutional requirements of transition to a *modern* society in India. It is necessary to recognise that modernisation cannot be equated with industrialisation even though the latter is an essential element of the former. It is a more comprehensive concept which also requires development of *modern* values and social and political institutions. No doubt modernisation in the non-economic sphere is influenced by the requirements of industrialisation. But the nature, forms and speed of industrialisation are also influenced by the demands of modernisation in the non-economic spheres. In other words, in considering the question what institutional pattern is most suitable for countries like India in the field of agriculture it is appropriate not only to keep the requirements of industrialisation in view but the compulsions of the processes of modernisation as a whole. It is appropriate not merely to keep the short-term requirements of the economy, polity and society in view but also the long-term perspective.

It is necessary to have an adequate understanding of the history of other countries which provide examples of modernisation to underdeveloped countries. But for the construction of models of modernisation suitable for underdeveloped countries like India such an understanding is not enough if it leads only to attempts at thoughtless imitation. A study of the history of different countries should itself provide a corrective to the tendency of thoughtless imitation and should bring out the necessity of innovation of institutional patterns. If history has any lesson to offer, it is that a great diversity of institutional patterns has been associated with the processes of modernisation. In particular, the emergence of an industrial economy has been associated with diverse paths of modernisation of agriculture or with great variations in the patterns of agrarian re-organisation. This diversity assumes added significance in the case of underdeveloped countries to-day and both economic and non-economic considerations contribute to this diversity. This institutional diversity is a response not only to the economic

requirements of industrialisation but also to the socio-political requirements arising from the past history of that country and from the compulsions of the modern world to which all countries are exposed. A study of the socio-political compulsions arising from the past history of a country and from the general processes of modernisation therefore should also concern those who are enquiring into the institutional patterns most suitable for economic development in India. It should be noted that only economists have been concerned with the study of *institutional patterns* and only in rare cases they have considered this question from a wider standpoint. In particular the study of the desirable institutional pattern in agriculture has not emerged as a subject of investigation in its own right. Economists have been interested in this question only to the limited extent necessitated by an examination of the economic requirements of industrialisation.

It is only in the recent past that economists are becoming conscious of the fact that the process of institutional adaptation and innovation is a wider process which is not independent of the pulls of economic growth but cannot be explained wholly in terms of these economic pulls.

We first reproduce the following extract from Alexander Gershenkron's historical study of the patterns of economic development where he criticises 'ethnocentrism' resulting in blindness to the new features in the developmental patterns of 'later-comer' countries.<sup>68</sup>

'What makes it so difficult for an advanced country to appraise properly the industrialisation process of its less fortunate brethren is the fact that in every instance of industrialisation, imitation of the evolution in advanced countries appears in combination with *different indigenously determined elements*. If it is not always easy for the advanced countries to accept the former, it is even more difficult for them to acquiesce in the latter. This is particularly true of the institutional instruments used in carrying out industrial developments and even more so of ideologies which accompany it. *What can be derived from a historical review is a strong sense for the significance of the native elements in the industrialisation of backward countries*' (emphasis added).

We refer next to a recent address by Simon Kuznets who highlights the question of *institutional innovations* as a central issue for the less developed countries.<sup>69</sup> To quote:

'If the observations just made are valid, several implications for the growth problems of the less developed countries follow...But at least one implication is sufficiently intriguing, and seems to be illuminating of many recent events in the field, to warrant a brief note. It is

68. Alexander Gershenkron, *Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1962, p. 26.

69. Simon Kuznets, "Modern Economic Growth, Findings and Reflections", *The American Economic Review*, Vol. LXIII, No. 3, June 1973.

that a substantial economic advance in the less developed countries may require modifications in the available stock of material technology and probably *even greater innovations in political and social structure*. It will not be a matter of merely borrowing existing tools, material and social; or of directly applying past patterns of growth, merely allowing for the difference in parameters.

'The innovational requirements are likely to be particularly great in the social and political structures. The rather violent changes in these structures that occurred in those countries that have forged ahead with highly forced industrialisation under Communist auspices... are conspicuous illustrations of the kind of social invention and innovation that may be involved. And the variants even of Communist organisation, let alone those of democracy and non-Communist authoritarianism, are familiar. It would be an oversimplification to argue that these innovations in the social and political structures were made primarily in response to the strain between economic backwardness and the potential of modern economic growth; or to claim that they were inexorable effects to antecedent history. But to whatever the struggle for political and social organisation is a response, once it has been resolved, the results shape significantly the conditions under which economic growth can occur. It seems highly probable that a long period of experimentation and struggle toward a viable political framework compatible with adequate economic growth lies ahead for most less developed countries of today; and this process will become more intensive and acute as the *perceived* gap widens between what has been attained and what is attainable with modern economic growth. While an economist can argue that some aspects of growth must be present because they are indispensable components (i.e. industrialisation, large-scale productions etc.), even their parameters are bound to be variable; and many specific characteristics will be so dependent upon the outcome of the social and political innovations that extrapolation from the past is extremely hazardous.'

We have reproduced this long passage only because this is one of the very few occasions when a leading economist has explicitly recognised that vital factors other than economic growth are relevant in the choice and innovation of institutional patterns by the less developed countries.

This question of identifying factors which necessitate innovation of institutional patterns has seldom been very sharply raised in social science and specially in economics. It has been raised mostly in the writings of political leaders and political analysts of the Indian economic problem. Among the many compulsions to which an underdeveloped country is exposed, there are four which have been identified by these political leaders and analysts as of crucial significance in influencing the choice of the institutional patterns and paths of modernisation. They constitute the motive forces of historical movement in the less developed countries.

1. The first is the concept of nationalism which is the most powerful force in countries like India. In the earlier phase it assumed the form of multi-class movements for political independence and it now assumes the form of mobilisation for national development. In the earlier phase the division of the world into the colonising and the colonised countries provided the basis of anti-imperialist movements in the colonies. In the subsequent period the division of the world into the rich and the poor, into the developed and the backward countries provides the basis for the urge for national consolidation and development. This concept of national development is the unifying framework after the achievement of national independence. Implicit in this broad concept are three basic ideas : (i) the idea of economic independence or national self-reliance; (ii) the idea of planned economic development in view of the need for bridging the widening gap between the rich and poor countries; and (iii) the idea of structural change with a view to removing the social chasms and economic cleavages inherited from the past and the division between the strong and the weak and the rich and the poor within the same nation. Since the peasants constitute the most numerous section among the havenots, the idea of peasant emancipation and uplift has historically emerged as the hard core of the concept of national development.

One must take cognizance here of the distinction between the conservative and the radical interpretations of the concept of nationalism. While the former ignores the chasms and cleavages within the nation in the name of national solidarity, the latter exposes the inner schisms within the nation which must be removed through structural reorganisation for achieving national solidarity on a more enduring basis. Radical nationalism thus attaches crucial significance to land reforms while conservative nationalism tends to ignore or soft-pedal it. The concept of radical nationalism is thus closely related to the concept of equality which constitutes the second major force of the present epoch.

2. The concept of equality has been rapidly becoming a part of the consciousness of the vast masses of the underdeveloped countries the most numerous of whom are the poor peasants living in the villages. In a traditionally hierarchical society which was founded on the principle of inequality the introduction of the concept of equality is a revolutionary force challenging the entire ideological and institutional framework of social existence. It is the creator of new urges and aspirations among the havenots and therefore the generator of social forces necessitating far-reaching innovations in the institutional patterns and paths of modernisation. The equality urge is tremendously strengthened by the vast network of modern communications and mass media which bring the havenots into touch with the social realities of the developed world where the dream of equality and freedom from want has been substantially realised. If the principle of equality—and equality also subsumes the elimination of worst forms of social

parasitism and poverty—has to be a major premise of economic growth, it brings to the forefront the question of new institutional patterns contributing to growth with equality.

Neither economists nor sociologists and political scientists have so far given adequate weight to the implications of this concept of equality in their studies on economic, social, and political questions. In fact, the great hiatus between the normative principle of equality and the inequalitarian social structure should have been one of the vital fields of social enquiry by economists, sociologists and political scientists. The more economists and sociologists explore the question of growing social conflicts and social movements, the more they would be led towards conceptual and analytical innovations for incorporating the premise of equality in scientific analyses.

A beginning has been made by some social scientists. Andre Beteille's concept of 'Harmonic and Disharmonic Systems'<sup>70</sup> is a good starting point for further analysis in this direction.

The distinction made by Joshi between 'land reform as ideology' and 'land reform as programme'<sup>71</sup> is also an attempt to show that the ideological basis of the new political regime in India has shifted from the principle of inequality to that of equality. But this change is not yet fully reflected even at the level of formulation of economic programmes, let alone at the level of their implementation. What kind of agrarian system is compatible with this ever-growing urge for equality among the peasant masses? This question has not yet been fully explored at the scientific level. If the right to work and employment is the hard core of this concept of equality, then what kind of institutional pattern would best guarantee this right to work to the masses? At the ideological level the concept of equality has already got linked with an anti-capitalist perspective of institutional change. That is why the need for institutional innovations has become so urgent.

3. The third major force of the contemporary period is the concept of democracy or the idea of people as the source of all political power which has been embodied in the Indian Constitution. The practice of adult franchise for election to Parliament and the State legislatures, the provision of rights of protest and of organisation for all classes of society, the acceptance of the principle of a free press and independent judiciary, and the existence of a multi-party system, of trade unions, *kisan sabhas* and other professional organisations—all these constitute the framework of a democratic polity. On account of such a framework the urge for equality does not remain a mere ideological force. It stimulates the formation of pressure groups which articulate these urges and crystallise the demand for a more egalitarian

70. Andre Beteille, *Studies in Agrarian Social Structure*, Ch. 8, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1973, p. 1974.

71. P.C. Joshi "Land Reform and Agrarian Change in India and Pakistan since 1947", in Ratna Dutta and P.C. Joshi (eds.), *Studies in Asian Social Development*, Tata-McGraw-Hill, New Delhi, 1971.

institutional pattern. The acceptance of the principle of democracy in the political sphere thus releases forces demanding a break from the dominant institutional patterns favouring the 'haves' in the economic sphere. The tensions and conflicts generated on account of the traditionally hierarchical social structure and the newly-introduced concepts of equality and democracy pulling in opposite directions offer a challenging field of social and political analysis. This has profound implications when analysing problems of economic development. (Yogendra Singh's dissertation on the changing power structure in eastern Uttar Pradesh is one of the few attempts at sociological analysis of this important question.<sup>72</sup>)

An important political question for scientific exploration is that of the lag in the political articulation and organisation of the peasant masses and of the lack of their adequate representation in the power structure. What explains this lag between the provision of constitutional rights and the actual exercise of these rights? History shows that the peasantry is seldom capable of throwing up an autonomous social movement under its own leadership for its emancipation from the rule of the feudal or semi-feudal landed interests. The emergence of the peasantry as a political force is therefore linked with the emergence of a *power bloc* independent of landed interests and capable of delivering powerful economic and political blows on the economic and political rule of the landed interests. Formulating agrarian programme is thus not just an economic question. It is part of the larger question of changing the overall balance of political forces in favour of the peasant masses. In the specific situation of underdeveloped countries certain agrarian policies may be required primarily from the point of view of attacking the economic bases of the political power of privileged groups like the landlords and the rich peasants and of shifting the power structure in favour of peasant masses. Herein lies the major difference between the conservative nationalist and the radical-nationalist approaches to the agrarian question.

It may be noted that mere propagation of the principle of equality without creating conditions for it at the economic and political levels may erode the social base of the ruling elite from the privileged classes without the gain of support from the peasant masses. This is the fate of many 'intermediate regimes.'<sup>73</sup> In these regimes the ruling elite thrives on the political support of the peasant masses on the basis of the affirmation of the equality principle. But in the field of the economy as distinguished from the polity the ruling elite keeps on compromising with the landed interests. In these

72. Yogendra Singh, "The Changing Power Structure of Village Community—A Case Study of Six Villages In Eastern U.P.," *Rural Sociology in India*, Fourth Revised Edition, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1969, pp. 711–744.

73. For the concept of 'intermediate regimes', see, Michael Kalecki, *Selected Essays on the Economic Growth of the Socialist and the Mixed Economies*, Cambridge University Press, 1972.

regimes therefore there can either be a retreat under the pressure of landed interests from the equality principle (i.e. from the radical land reforms in which this principle is embodied). Or there can be a continuing attack on the landed interests through a series of land reform measures in response to the demands of the equality principle. The 'intermediate regime' is based on these conflicting pulls, resulting in advances and retreats on the land question. The analysis of land reforms and agrarian change in countries like India involves, therefore, a politico-economic analysis of shifts in the power balance, of disintegration of old power blocs and the formation of new power blocs. Such analysis has, however, been neglected by economists, sociologists and political scientists.

4. The fourth major force is the modern scientific and technological revolution which in the developed countries has provided the material resources and skills for unprecedented affluence and prosperity. It has not yet made its full impact in the poor countries because of the absence of a favourable institutional framework and adequate resource mobilisation. But the very question of a full release of the forces of technological progress and their utilisation for giving a practical shape to the equality ideal at the economic level compels a reconsideration or rejection of the conventional standpoints on economic growth emphasising the evolutionary adaptation of old, rather than the innovation of new, institutional structures. The interaction of technological forces, the class structure and the power structure has emerged as the most important issue for scientific analysis. For the pattern of technological progress is not neutral to the institutional structure. What form does technological progress take depends very much on the overall balance of the power structure and the nature of the class structure. But technological progress itself releases forces affecting the class structure and the power balance.

An examination of the studies on land reforms in India shows that, barring a few scholars, political leaders and administrators, economists generally have not been concerned with an exploration of the impact of socio-political and technological forces on the institutional structure. Some general discussion of these aspects and some thinking on problems of land reforms from this angle has been presented by scholars like Myrdal in *Economic Theory and Underdeveloped Regions* and in *Asian Drama*, by Guy Hunter in *Modernising Peasant Societies*, by Gadgil in *Planning and Economic Policy in India*, by Wertheim in *East-West Parallels*, by Doreen Warriner in *Land Reform in Principle and Practice*, by Charles Bettelheim in *India Independent*, by Gyan Chand in *Socialist Transformation of Indian Economy*, by Barrington-Moore, Jr. in *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*, by Dandekar and Rath in *Poverty in India*, by A.R. Desai in *Rural Sociology in India*, by Joshi in 'Agrarian Social Structure and Social Change' and 'The Cultural Dimension of Economic Development: Past Experience and Tasks Ahead' and by G. Parthasarathy in *Green Revolution and Weaker Sec-*

tions and some of his other papers. Among the important writings of political leaders and administrators from this point of view are E.M.S. Nambudiripad's *Economics and Politics of Socialist Pattern*, Mohit Sen's *The Indian Revolution : Review and Perspective*, Jayaprakash Narayan's *Face to Face* and Tarlok Singh's *Poverty and Social Change in India* and Ajit Roy's *Planning in India* and some other writings.

Some discussion is also available in reports of the First, Second, Third and Fourth Five Year Plans on socio-political aspects of economic growth and planning. A condensed statement will be found in the first chapter in the Third Five Year Plan on 'Objectives of Planned Economic Development' which is reported to have been written by Jawaharlal Nehru himself. But it should be pointed out here that economic and social theory is so far lagging very much behind the needs of the new social situation faced by underdeveloped countries like India. This lag is most pronounced in the case of thinking on the question of agrarian reconstruction.

Our main purpose here is to focus attention on the vastly changed social context of the underdeveloped countries in the contemporary world. It is also meant to raise the question how far old patterns of agrarian change and economic development—English Enclosures, Prussian Junkerism, Japan's enlightened landlordism, or Russian collectivisation—can be reproduced in the Asian context in general and the Indian context in particular. Thus the search for new institutional patterns becomes urgent in countries where adult franchise and the right of political protest and organisation have been provided to the peasants much before modern economic development has been achieved and where the equality principle has been propagated among the rural masses by different sections of the ruling elite for more than half a century. In other words, it becomes necessary to skip over many stages of historical development and to ensure that economic growth becomes an instrument of equality, mass welfare and democratisation right from the very beginning. This is a task without historical precedents and parallels and therefore calls for a lot of innovativeness.

Innovativeness is specially required because the search for equality and democratisation have to assume such institutional forms as are favourable to economic growth and not detrimental to it. And the search for economic growth has to assume such forms as are favourable to equality and democracy and not detrimental to it. There is another crucial factor contributing to the urgency for institutional innovations. In countries like India characterised by a backlog of unemployment and underemployment and by the population explosion, the rate growth of employment in the non-agricultural sector is not so high as to allow for a massive population transfer from the agricultural to non-agricultural employment. The institutional framework in agriculture has therefore to be evolved keeping this urgent need of absorption of the increasing labour force within the rural sector for the period of transition which is bound to be much longer than

what had been anticipated earlier. All these pose new challenges for economic and social theory and for economic planning which have first to be met in the scientific sphere.

One of the factors obstructing any sustained work by economists on the question of new socio-political compulsions and their influence on institutional innovations in agriculture is what Myrdal calls the 'moral discord'<sup>74</sup> in Western economic and social thought. This discord is reflected in the commitment to the equality principle on the ideological plane but the compromise against this principle on economic questions in the name of considerations of higher productivity. Economic theory is thus based on the premise of an inherent 'conflict between more equal distribution and higher productivity'.<sup>75</sup> Without a thorough re-appraisal of this basic premise, it does not seem possible that economics would get seriously oriented to studying questions of institutional transformation and innovation. (In fact, Myrdal himself is not free from such 'moral discord' when he so passionately affirms the principle of equality but recommends capitalist farming on the basis of economic considerations.<sup>76</sup>)

There is another important factor thwarting research on these problems to which Bottomore has drawn attention. The study of these questions often takes the shape of philosophical reflections or general treatises which do not entirely satisfy the purist's conception of a truly scientific work. Consequently, 'the exclusive insistence on a rigorous "scientific" method has tended to create a conservative outlook'.<sup>77</sup> The existing social framework and the processes of social transformation are outside the scope of study, because they are too complex for 'scientific' examination; scientific economics and sociology are then mainly concerned with investigation of small-scale problems which are carefully isolated from the wider social processes. It is no accident that problems requiring sociological insight and imagination have generally been left to be tackled either by the so-called 'soft' disciplines or by journalists, political activists and social workers. (The definition of technical skills is generally a narrow definition and it does not subsume sociological insight and imagination.) For example, the question of changing consciousness of the rural masses—their break from the ideology of fatalism—has been ignored because it is not amenable to analysis on the basis of the conventional tools of the economists. In fact, the entire question of the cultural dimension of economic development and social change is one of the most neglected areas of scientific study. (In a country where the peasantry is still outside the stream of literacy and modern education, the neglect of the cultural dimension constitutes a serious gap

74. Gunnar Myrdal, *The Economic Theory and the Underdeveloped Regions*, Vora & Co., Bombay, 1958, p. 172.

75. *Ibid.*, p. 131.

76. Gunnar Myrdal, *Asian Drama*, Vol. II, op. cit., p. 1380.

77. T.B. Bottomore, *Sociology*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1962, p. 301.

in social science research. Quite a lot of pessimism regarding the prospect of institutional innovations in rural society arises out of the fact of cultural backwardness of the peasants. The study of the causes of this cultural backwardness is necessary for broadening the scope for institutional change in rural areas.

The question of institutional innovations is also related to a sense of history and to an insight into the developmental history of the various countries and, in fact, into different regions within the same country. A historical study of changing economy and society of the Punjab and a comparative study of dynamic regions like the Punjab and Haryana and of less dynamic regions like Bihar and Bengal may be rewarding. An examination of institutional problems in a historical and comparative perspective is essential for appreciating the need and scope for innovations. *But both historical and comparative studies are the weakest areas of social science research in India.* In fact, Indian scholars have yet to produce works like T.C. Smith's *Agrarian Origins of Modern Japan*, E.H. Norman's *Japan's Emergence as a Modern State* and R.P. Dore's *Land Reforms in Japan*. There are several impediments to the development of such inter-disciplinary studies in India. The foremost difficulty is that the agrarian question has so far been treated in India as a problem belonging to the domain of economics and not as a many-sided problem for which one has to draw upon many disciplines.

The understanding of the diversity of social structures (of which the agrarian structure is the hard core) is extremely important for identifying the innovational requirements in the field of institutions even within the same country. And here attention can be drawn to two important deficiencies. Firstly, economists have seldom tried to familiarise themselves with the work done by sociologists, anthropologists and political scientists on the diversity of institutions and values in India. Secondly, sociologists, anthropologists and political scientists have seldom undertaken enquiries into institutions and values from a dynamic and developmental perspective. Their intellectual response to the challenge of institutional innovations has not been adequate. There is now a growing awareness among sociologists of this deficiency. Ramkrishna Mukherjee's concept of the 'soft spots'<sup>78</sup> in the social structure, his stress on 'diagnostic'<sup>79</sup> research and Dube's concept of 'management'<sup>80</sup> of change as distinguished from 'explanation' of change are significant pointers towards a dynamic re-orientation of anthropology and sociology.

Why is the subject of institutional innovation in Indian agriculture not

78. Gunnar Myrdal, *Asian Drama*, Vol. I, op. cit., p. 66.

79. Ramkrishna Mukherjee, "Indian Sociology: Historical Development and Present Problems", *Sociological Bulletin*, Vol. 22, No. 1, March 1973.

80. S.C. Dube, *Explanation and Management of Change*, Tata-McGraw Hill, New Delhi, 1971.

yet the central problem of scientific research is a crucial question the clues to which lie outside the sphere of social science. It should be noted that the political processes in India have not yet decisively resolved the question whether economic growth is to serve the interests only of the privileged groups or of the rural masses which constitute the majority in the rural areas. Let it be noted that in India now the trend of social, economic and political change has thrown up two divergent, indeed contradictory, institutional alternatives for economic growth. The first is the capitalist framework of development of the rural economy in which the large producers recruited from erstwhile feudal landlords and upper strata tenants are consciously promoted and strengthened for economic growth. The rural masses suffer the social and economic consequences of this path, though various welfare schemes may be devised to soften the stresses and strains of this path of transition. The alternative to this capitalist path is that of a renovated peasant (and artisan) economy within a cooperative framework as the main institutional pattern of economic growth in the transitional period.

These two alternative paths make different kinds of demands in the sphere of social science research. The latter perspective of development is opposed to the first in so far as it raises the question, in the words of Wertheim, 'of the elimination of the well-to-do farmers as a power group'.<sup>81</sup> This is because there can be no effective transition to a cooperative rural economy 'if these *kulaks* are allowed to counteract or dodge the reforms or to compete with the cooperative society'. Further, 'because of their strength they are dangerous to any movement for pursuing a policy which aims at improvement of the living conditions for those who form the poor majority in the village'.<sup>82</sup> The latter involves therefore a break from the policy of 'betting on the strong' and a positive support to a policy of 'betting on the many'.

The latter perspective makes far-reaching demands in terms of social science research in so far as the concept of a *cooperative rural economy* here is closely linked to concepts of new types of power structure, administrative and legal procedures and practices, educational system and social and cultural patterns. The problems raised by this many-sided process of rural transformation go beyond conventional economics or sociology or political science. They require a capacity to construct a *synthetic view* drawing upon all vital branches of social science and also upon sciences dealing with the technological innovations.

This synthesising which is very close to the original Marxian approach nevertheless would require a reformulation also of the Marxian approach

81. W.F. Wertheim, "Betting On The Strong", in A.R. Desai (ed.), *Rural Sociology in India*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1969, p. 902.

82. *Ibid.*, p. 902.

to social change as practised by present-day Marxists in the light of new assumptions and developments. These versions of the Marxian approach concentrate on the analysis of the economic basis without reference to the superstructure. Thus they seldom explore the whole question of the possibility of bringing about an alteration of the economic basis by trying to influence the process of change in the superstructure at certain critical points. This methodological procedure which has become so common among Indian Marxists does not provide an adequate methodology for studying the problems of agrarian reconstruction in countries like India. From this angle the otherwise very valuable analyses of agrarian change by scholars like Gregori Kotovsky, Sulekh Gupta, Utsa Patnaik, Paresh Chattopadhyaya and many others offer more an insight into aspects of *what is happening* in Indian rural economy without reference to *why it is happening* and *what were or are the possibilities of institutional transformation* in the interest of the rural masses. There is an assumption here that what is happening is what was bound to happen. There is no examination of the forces which explain the gap between the actual and the ideal, between what was desired and what actually happened. These scholars do not explore the question as to whether the failure to influence the process of change in the superstructure is responsible for the failure to change the agrarian structure in the desired direction. It is important to note that very few Marxist analysts of the agrarian problem have taken up the study of the problems of rural illiteracy and cultural backwardness, of the formation of political parties and class organisations, of the nature of the Indian bureaucracy from the point of view of agrarian change etc., problems which have a vital influence on the patterns of agrarian evolution. (One of the few exceptions among Marxist scholars is E.M.S. Namboodiripad who has made a significant departure by raising the questions of cultural barriers to structural transformation in India in his book *Economics and Politics of the Socialist Pattern*.<sup>83</sup>)

It is to be noted that this neglect of the problems of the superstructure is generally common also among Indian economists.<sup>84</sup> There are exceptions like Amartya Sen who have attached considerable importance to spread of literacy, primary and secondary education for releasing social forces favourable to land reforms in the interest of poor peasants. It should be pointed out that the failure of the economists to explore *the implementation lag* in land reforms is basically a failure arising out of the habit of relegating the question of changes in the entire superstructure to the background. Econo-

83. E.M.S. Namboodiripad, *Economics and Politics of the Socialist Pattern*, Part VI, People's Publishing House, New Delhi, 1966.

84. See, for instance, a valuable collection of papers under the title, *Readings in Indian Agricultural Development*, edited by Pramith Chaudhury (George Allen & Unwin, London, 1972). There is not one paper in this collection dealing with socio-cultural obstacles to agricultural transformation. Land reforms alone has been discussed as an institutional factor.

mists have not been able to go beyond identifying the lack of political will as a basic factor responsible for the implementation lag. But what explains the lack of political will? To raise the question of political will is to go beyond narrow economic analysis and to raise questions relating to the nature of the 'superstructure'. In a chapter devoted to 'Political Dynamics in South Asia' in his book, *The Challenge of World Poverty*, Gunnar Myrdal has made a bold attempt to explore the interaction of politics and economics. Even though his explanation misses some of the complexity of the political-economic situation in countries like India, the attempt denotes a shift from narrow economic analysis to political economy.

It should further be noted that the neglect of the political dimension of the agrarian problem has resulted in the failure to look for multiple possibilities of transition to a modern society in countries like India. In the absence of an understanding of socio-political processes, social scientists have generally been led towards treating economics as a *positive* science rather than a *normative-cum-positive* discipline. This neglect of the normative dimension is in fact a rationalisation of the interests of the dominant social groups. The tendency to analyse the institutional pattern actually emerging in rural India from the point of view of its suitability for economic growth suits the dominant groups who are interested in economic growth within the given framework. If the premise of growth with welfare of the rural masses is accepted as the main premise of scientific study, then the social scientist is obliged to explore paths of agrarian change and economic growth favourable to the peasant masses. The study of the land problem from such a normative perspective requires a re-examination of certain past approaches to the peasant problem which are an important part of the Western economic and social theory.

We must draw attention here to the three distinct approaches to the peasant question. The first is a part of the classical economic thought and represents a generalisation of the English experience. According to this approach 'the expropriation of the agricultural producer, of the peasant, from the soil is the basis of the whole process'<sup>85</sup> (of primitive accumulation and of capitalist development) and howsoever painful and destructive this process of expropriation might have been, it was a historically necessary process for the emergence of a modern society. The English experience left a permanent impress on economic thought and the tendency to universalise it resulted in a view of the inevitability of the disintegration of the peasant economy in the course of historical development. It also resulted in regarding the growth of capitalism in agriculture as a historically progressive process and, therefore, a necessary process for modern development.

The second approach arose in the process of questioning the above assumption. This questioning led towards rejection of the view of the in-

85. Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. I, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, p. 716.

evitability of capitalism for economic progress and towards an affirmation of the possibility of economic progress through socialist transformation of all branches of the economy including agriculture. The important point to note is that the second approach also had one assumption in common with the first one. Both emphasised that the institutional framework of the small peasant economy was not compatible with the requirements of modern economic growth. The small peasant economy had therefore to be replaced by a capitalist or collective agriculture.

The third important approach is represented by the ideologists (and the theorists) of the peasantry like the *narodniks* in Russia and the Gandhites in India. The common feature of this third approach is the rejection of both capitalist and socialist forms of agriculture, the characterisation of the peasant economy as a distinct mode of production and the emphasis on the potentialities of the peasant economy as an institutional framework for modern economic growth. An important element of this approach is also the emphasis on the peasant not only as an economic but also a social and cultural category which is not just a relic of the past but a repository of certain values of enduring significance.<sup>86</sup>

An evaluation of these three approaches in the light of the Western, the Russian, the East-European, the Chinese, the Japanese and the Taiwanese experiments in agrarian reconstruction and on the basis of a consideration of the peculiar conditions in countries like India has not yet been done seriously by social scientists. There is the possibility of the crystallisation of a new trend of thought on this question of agrarian reconstruction if this evaluation is seriously pursued. The question of modernisation of the peasantry without the torments and the turmoil suffered by the peasant in past history which has become the most important question for Asian countries like India has not yet become the most important question for social scientists. This question of agrarian reconstruction has to be explored from this wider perspective of minimising the stresses and strains and maximising the gains of the peasant masses in the process of modernisation. In the past the question that has generally concerned social science has been: What are the changes which the peasant society must undergo in order to create the pre-conditions for industrialisation? It is now appropriate to reformulate the question: In what way is industrialisation to be re-defined or restructured so as to minimise the strains and maximise the gains of the peasant masses? What are the institutional and cultural forms that can be devised so as to soften the rigours of this transition?

Moreover, the peasant question needs to be considered not only from the angle of creating the pre-requisites of economic growth but also those of political democratisation and socio-cultural modernisation. The German

86. See, Teodor Shanin, *Peasants and Peasant Societies*, Introduction, Penguin Books, 1971.

and Japanese experiences during the nineteenth and early twentieth century clearly show that there can be solutions to the peasant question which may satisfy the requirements of economic growth without meeting the requirements of democracy and modern culture. Prussian Junkerism and Japanese landlordism did release the forces of economic growth but they also resulted in a political and cultural lag. Such lopsided modernisation as a consequence of the postponement of an all-sided anti-feudal revolution was one of the main contributors to the emergence of militaristic chauvinism in Germany and Japan.

Among social scientists Barrington Moore, Jr. is one of the few who has attempted an analysis of the agrarian origins of dictatorship and democracy in the modern world. There is enormous scope for this type of analysis if one takes up the study of the main patterns of agrarian evolution and modernisation in underdeveloped countries of the Asian region. This would require a shift from economics of land tenure to political economy of the agrarian structure. It would also require construction of concepts which are politico-economic and macro-sociological. Marxists have generally tended to utilise the conceptual frame of transition from feudalism to capitalism for an understanding of this process of agrarian change. This classical model is not adequate in the current situation as it does not take adequate note of the compulsions of the new historical epoch; nor does it take full account of the role of the superstructure in the process of change of the economic basis. Lange's concept of *national-revolutionary patterns of development*,<sup>87</sup> Kalecki's concept of *intermediate regimes*<sup>88</sup> further elaborated by K.N. Raj,<sup>89</sup> Myrdal's concept of the *soft state*<sup>90</sup> and Joshi's use of the concept of *parasitism* are attempts to evolve synthetic or unifying concepts which try to capture the dynamic relation of the 'superstructure' and the 'basis'.

To sum up, in considering the peasant question from a wider angle one has therefore to give as much weight to problems of cultural renewal and political change as to the problems of technological progress and economic development. From this standpoint the following emerge as crucial problem areas for social science research:

1. The problems of reconstruction of the peasant economy from the angle of creating the institutional pattern of modern economic growth in agriculture.
2. Problems of technological progress and capital accumulation and their relation to reconstruction of agrarian relations.
3. The problem of cultural renewal of the peasantry and its implications

87. Oscar Lange, "Patterns of Economic Development and Planning", *Papers in Economics and Sociology, 1930-60*, Warsaw, 1970.

88. Kalecki, *op. cit.*

89. K.N. Raj, "The Economics and Politics of Intermediate Regimes", *Indian Left-Review*, Vol. II, No. 9, November 1973.

90. Gunnar Myrdal, *op. cit.*

for re-orienting economic, educational and cultural policies.

4. The problem of peasant power and its implications for the re-orientation of the parliamentary-democratic framework.

## CHAPTER VI

### AGRARIAN STRUCTURE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

THE ROLE OF AGRARIAN STRUCTURE in economic development is one of the most important problems for social science research in underdeveloped countries. It is important to note that this problem has attracted the attention of many eminent economists in India though it has been by and large neglected by sociologists, anthropologists and political scientists. As we have indicated in this survey at several places, the basic gaps in the work by economists on the land problem can be attributed partly to the lack of work by anthropologists, sociologists, political scientists and geographers which would have contributed greater realism and depth to the work by economists. There is yet no systematic evaluation of the work done by economists in the field of agrarian structure and economic development. Certain critical observations are, however, available from the writings of some economists.

In his perceptive essay on 'Agricultural Economics Research and Economic Planning in India', S.R. Sen has highlighted some of the basic weaknesses of research in the field of agricultural economics in India. The 'neglect of economic analysis' and the 'lofty preference for philosophical essays' have been identified by him as the two major deficiencies in this field. Sen observes:

'... the influence of statisticians on agricultural economics has become so great lately that if earlier studies on the subject were characterised by too heroic generalisations based on too few data, the more recent studies perhaps contain too much of statistics and too little of economic analysis.'<sup>91</sup>

As a check on the general philosophising, Sen recommends:

'While philosophical essays by mature and experienced research workers in the field can be most stimulating and valuable, it may perhaps be salutary if all research apprentices accept a self-imposed discipline that they would not publish any such essay until they have done a couple of years' field work and completed rigorous analytical study of at least one technical problem.'<sup>92</sup>

In his recent work on *The Economics of Land Reform and Farm Size in India* A.M. Khusro has also noted that 'in most writings on questions of agrarian structure the framework of analysis is the framework of common-sense and the language of analysis is the language of public administration. . . .' (p. XI). These cryptic statements sum up some of the glaring deficiencies of land reform studies in India. These deficiencies are, however,

91. S.R. Sen, *The Strategy of Agricultural Development*, Asia Publishing House, Delhi, 1966, p. 96.

92. *Ibid.*, p. 100.

related to a more basic weakness viz. the absence of 'an intimate and proper relationship between observation and theoretical speculation' which is absolutely necessary for the growth of scientific knowledge. In fact, this constitutes the basic weakness of Indian social science as a whole and is reflected also in land reforms studies. It is this basic weakness which needs further elaboration and substantiation which we shall try to provide in this section.

It is important to note that the study of the relationship of agrarian structure and economic development has been attempted in many cases without either clarifying the concepts or following a genuinely scientific methodology. For studying the agrarian structure in India the terms 'feudal', 'semi-feudal' and 'capitalist' have been indiscriminately used without always distinguishing between the Western and the Indian variants of feudalism. Charles Bettelheim has defended the use of the term semi-feudal for the Indian agrarian structure on the ground that some of the *typical* elements of feudalism are present in the Indian situation. These elements have been identified as: '(1) absence of a labour market in a large part of the rural sector; (2) the personal subservience of the immediate producer to the land-owner; (3) the excessive importance of land rent; (4) the underdeveloped marketing system resulting in little social division of labour, a low rate of accumulation and the use of produce mainly to satisfy immediate needs.'<sup>93</sup>

There are three aspects of this question of the use of Western terms and concepts for analysing the Indian agrarian structure. Firstly, the purpose of scientific enquiry is not just to find suitable labels for a certain social phenomenon on the basis of past experience but to ascertain in what respect this phenomenon conforms to the general pattern and in what respect it is unique. The purpose thus is not merely to identify it on the basis of a general category but also to explore its specific peculiarities not found elsewhere. It should be pointed out that studies of Indian agrarian structure have sometimes been concerned with finding suitable labels for them and with endless debates as to whether this or that label is more suitable. The terms have not served as the starting point of an investigation into general as well as specific features of the Indian agrarian structure, the investigation resulting in modification and enrichment of the original concepts. Scholars of the Indian situation have not always even cared to empirically substantiate the features which Bettelheim identified as typical of feudalism.

Secondly, India is not a country of small or medium size but one of sub-continental dimensions having tremendous regional diversity. It would be necessary to work out sub-types of Indian feudalism if the term feudalism is found appropriate in a broad sense to comprehend the essential features of the pre-modern agrarian structure of an underdeveloped country. In other words, the elements of feudalism which have a universal significance and

93. Charles Bettelheim, *India Independent*, Maggibon & Kee, London, 1968, p. 23.

those which are specific to different regions have to be demarcated and explored in depth. In particular the variations between the wholly moribund and retrogressive agrarian structure of the eastern region and the somewhat less retrogressive agrarian structures of the north-western region have to be systematically explored both at the theoretical and at the empirical levels. Thirdly, in different regions of India native categories are in vogue to identify the various features of the agrarian structure. A scientific examination of those native categories with reference to actual conditions which they seek to depict would be very rewarding in so far as it would bring out the full richness and complexity of the agrarian relations.

It is important to note that even when an attempt is made to identify the regional variations of agrarian systems it is usually done through the use of such terms as *Jagirdari*, *Zamindari* and *Raiyatwari* systems which have mainly legal and juridical rather than socio-economic significance. As Thorner pointed out long back, this habit of characterising land systems as *Zamindari* or *Raiyatwari* results from equating *revenue* systems with the actual agrarian structure (i.e. mutual relations of landlords, tenants and labourers). 'In terms of the forms of control of land and, broadly, the resulting socio-economic relations among the rural classes many districts of Madras and of Bombay are poles apart even though in terms of land revenue payment they are both *Raiyatwari*.'<sup>94</sup> For the examination of regional variations therefore a set of terms and concepts is required which is very different from those 'imported' or native categories which are now in vogue among analysts of agrarian structure in India or in other underdeveloped countries.

If we shift our attention from the analysis of the agrarian structure to an analysis of change in this structure, in India this change has sometimes been analysed as a process of transition from the 'feudal' to the 'capitalist' production relations. Here again it has been overlooked that this process of transition followed multiple paths in Western countries. While the use of this general framework may be accepted as a starting point of enquiry, the study is deficient if it only tries to put the facts of the Indian situation into readymade, general analytical boxes. If the general framework does not lead towards capturing the *specifics* of the Indian agrarian change, the analysis would suffer from the error of mechanical parallelism.

Most of the studies which have analysed agrarian change in terms of transition towards capitalism have restricted themselves to the emergence of a capitalist sector in the economy. They have, however, overlooked the more basic question of changes in the structure of the *peasant economy* which constitutes the main feature of the rural economy in labour-surplus and overpopulated countries like India. And it would be erroneous to think

94. Daniel Thorner, "The Agrarian Handbook for India", *The Agricultural Situation in India*, Souvenir Volume, 1954.

that theoretical tools for an analysis of the peasant economy already exist and the task is only to apply them to the Indian situation. The fact of the matter is that neither liberal economics nor Marxism offer readymade tools for the analysis of the peasant economy. That the capitalist development of the economy on modern lines necessarily requires the destruction of a peasant economy is an assumption which is implicit in both liberal economics and Marxism and which needs a thorough re-appraisal in the present context.

Certain limitations of liberal economics as well as Marxism should be kept in view while considering the peasant problem in underdeveloped countries. That Marx concentrated mostly on the analysis of 'the law of motion' of a capitalist economy; that he offers only certain hints and insights and not an elaborate conceptual and analytical structure for the study of pre-capitalist economic formations in Western countries; that he did not raise or explore the important problems of studying the peasantry in the Asian countries; that any one trying to use the Marxist conceptual framework of 'class' for this purpose must master the basic information about the Asian peasantry and also take into account the impact of the overall economic and political processes on the peasant problem—these fundamental considerations have not been seriously examined by the Marxists studying the Indian agrarian question. Moreover, the role of socio-cultural factors on economic processes has also not been taken into account; for instance, the growth of non-Brahman cultural movements (like Sikhism and DMK) in some parts and the persistence of ossified Brahmanism in other parts has important implications for the resilience or the stagnation of the peasant economy. This has also not been seriously examined by Marxists. In the absence of a broader view Marxists have tended to interpret the concept of change in relation to production in a mechanical manner. For instance, they have intended to see in the mere changeover from absentee landlordism to hired labour-based operation of their land holdings by former landlords the indications of growth of capitalism in agriculture. This assessment overlooks some of the essential economic and non-economic attributes of capitalism. In fact, what Weber said about the Prussian Junkers applies in basic respects to these landlords who are now trying to become modern farmers. Weber said that they represented an aristocracy corrupted by money-making and a capitalist class without a capitalist spirit because of aristocratic pretensions! The entire prospects of a virile capitalism in a labour-surplus and parasitism-laden economy requires serious reconsideration.

Similarly the liberal economists have also been guilty of an insufficient empirical knowledge of the Indian agrarian system which has led them towards indiscriminate use of concepts evolved in the Western social background. If the Marxists use the concept of class without adequately exploring the class and non-class (e.g. caste, religion etc.) elements in the formation of the peasantry, the liberal economists view the peasant as a *profit-*

*maximising entrepreneur* without reference to the complexity and heterogeneity of the Indian agrarian social structure in different parts of the country and also without regard to the differentiation of the peasantry into commercial farmers and subsistence peasants. The commercial farmer may approximate to the concept of a businessman but what about the overwhelming mass of the small producers exposed to the rigours of a market economy? What Alfred Marshall said about the ethnocentrism of the Western social scientists in the following words is valid even to-day for the Westernised Indian social scientists: 'The same bent of mind that led our lawyers to impose English civil law on the Hindoos led our economists to work out their theories on the supposition that the world was made of city men.'<sup>95</sup>

This can be illustrated on the basis of a simple example. For more than two decades since independence the Westernised intellectual and political elite has concentrated on *legislation* as the main instrument of land reforms in India. This concept of legislation has been taken over from Western capitalist democracies where both the capitalists and the workers, landlords and the tenants, as well as the intermediate classes of family farmers are part of the organised sector. And the capacity for bargaining among the organised classes enables them to make use of legislation for their own advantage. The tendency to equate the unorganised, inarticulate and unenlightened rural masses of countries like India with the organised classes of the developed capitalist countries arises from the tendency to fit the Indian social reality into a readymade conceptual -stereotype borrowed from the Western context.

Such mechanical transplantation of concepts makes the Indian elite blind to all those pre-modern features of the Indian peasantry which make the concept of legislation by itself as a method of social change very inadequate and ineffective for the Indian situation. And yet it is important to note that social scientists have generally failed to throw light on the hiatus between the pre-conceptions of the Indian elite and the Indian social reality.

It should be remembered that for countries like India the availability of readymade boxes of concepts, analytical frameworks and theories from the Western world is not always an asset; it can also turn into a liability. It has given impetus to thoughtless imitation and discouraged fresh thinking and innovation. In the West the processes of abstract reasoning on the one hand and that of fact-finding on the other proceeded in a natural way, one providing an impetus and broadening the scope for the other. To quote Sukhamoy Chakravarty: 'The most remarkable thing about the Western intellectual tradition has been a combination of abstract reasoning with close empirical observations. In our case empirical observation has been insufficiently stressed. As a result, we do not often notice facts which are

95. A. Marshall, *Principles of Economics*, 8th ed., 1920, Appendix B, Macmillan, London, 1956, p. 630.

highly relevant. . . . Similarly in our text books on social science there is very little emphasis on articulating theoretical framework in relation to the empirical material.<sup>96</sup> Thus in countries like India which are latecomers in the field of scientific development the situation has been very different. Here concept-building and theorising has not been sufficiently stimulated by empirical exploration and empirical exploration has not given impetus to concept-building and theorising. The theorists and the concept-builders have in many cases no empirical knowledge of their own environment. This absence of active interaction between abstraction and concretisation, between theory and empiricism, has also been very pronounced in the field of agricultural economics including land economics.

Apart from thoughtless importation of approaches, concepts and analytical frameworks, there has also emerged a new danger in the recent period in the form of a craze for technical sophistication. In fact, scientific rigour is now sometimes being wrongly equated with technical virtuosity and exactitude in measurement which have become the master key for all complicated problems of scientific analysis. This is a disquieting development because surrounded with the aura of the so-called technical skills, half-baked scientists can now pass for genuine scientists and amateurs who have not taken pains to familiarise themselves with the complexity of their own social and economic environment can pass for experts on the basis of mere familiarity with statistical and other tools and methods. Moreover, a number of scholars who 'refuse to apply themselves to important and interesting problems simply because the relevant factors cannot be measured condemn (economics) to sterility, because we cannot get very far with the study of measurable variables if these depend on, and are closely interwoven with immeasurable factors of whose nature and operation we know nothing.'<sup>97</sup>

This danger is especially great in the field of agrarian study. Here one is dealing with the peasant who is still pre-modern in many basic aspects. Any satisfactory study of this economic problem requires understanding of his whole life pattern since in his case the economic and the non-economic are not sharply dissociated. Innovations are therefore required in the field of scientific methodology for the study of such a complex phenomenon as the Indian peasant. A re-appraisal of the existing methodology of social science from the point of view of its effectiveness in studying the peasant is the first step in this direction. It may be useful to reproduce in this context the following perceptive observations of a Japanese economist on the complexity of the problems of studying the peasant economy:

"The economies of developing countries, though far from "modern",

96. Sukhamoy Chakravarty, "Higher Education, Social Change and National Development", *Inaugural Address*, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla, Nov. 18, 1972.

97. Stanislaw Andreski, *Elements of Comparative Sociology*, op. cit., p. 29. In the above quotation 'economics' has been substituted for 'sociology'.

are yet all the more "complex". Thus, for instance, the U.S. Steel Company, with its vast and intricate organisation, is by no means a complex economic body in the sense that its structural principle is simple and clear. On the other hand, an Asian rural community, comprising a small population and consisting of a few farm households, can often be very "complex" in the sense that it is not governed by any single structural principle and thus resists any purely "rational" or simplified attempt at understanding by others.<sup>98</sup>

The re-appraisal of the existing methodology of studying the peasant adopted by economists deserves special attention because in economics there generally exists a divorce between the process of data collection and that of analysis of data. In fact, the planning and organisation of collection of data and, more specifically, the economic investigation and survey of the village, are generally assigned to those who have nothing to do with the actual use and analysis of data. The investigators who collect the data, the statisticians who prepare the tables and the analysts who actually use the data and the tables for analytical purposes are dissociated from one another. The process of data collection, tabulation and analysis thus assume the character of mechanical operations. Since the analyst himself is not in the field for data collection he is deprived of the opportunity of continuous rethinking about his concepts and methods in the light of the stimulation received from direct contact with reality. The failure to grasp the specificities of one's own agrarian structure and to discern the difference between Indian and non-Indian variants of the agrarian economy (and between the West Bengal and the Bihar type of agrarian structure and the Punjab and Haryana type of agrarian structure) within the country can be attributed partly if not wholly to the divorce of the research workers from the field experience. And the importance of such field-work increases several fold especially when the research workers have been over-exposed through their reading, training and conditioning to the economic structures of Western countries. Such over-exposure makes them strangers to their own social and economic environment.

Social anthropologists like Srinivas have made a meaningful distinction between the book-view of reality and its empirical view.<sup>99</sup> The book-view of reality is derived from written texts while the empirical view of reality is derived from direct observation based on intensive field-work or participant observation. Recent anthropological investigations based on participant observations have revolutionised the conception about Indian village society by showing the discrepancy between the book-view and the field-view. It is a pity that most of these investigations have been concerned with the

98. Seiichi Tobara, "Foreword to the First Issue of The Journal", *The Developing Economies*, March 1962, p. 2.

99. M.N. Srinivas, *Caste in Modern India and Other Essays*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1962.

study of caste and the family only and not with the study of the village economy and the agrarian structure. Nevertheless, to the extent a beginning has been made by some economists themselves in the direction of adopting the *anthropological method* for the study of the agrarian structure the results have been very rewarding. Daniel Thorner's field studies showed the potentialities of field-work for acquiring new insights about the Indian agrarian structure. In the more recent period Amit Bhaduri's paper on 'Study in Agricultural Backwardness under Semi-feudalism'<sup>100</sup> for which the author made field visits to some West Bengal villages shows that such direct touch with the field provides a more sound basis for evolving a meaningful model of analysis of the agrarian structure. These positive examples sharply indicate how poverty of field experience also impoverishes the research work from a theoretical and analytical point of view and richness of field experience also helps to stimulate genuine theoretical and analytical creativity in the study of the agrarian structure. What Andresky has said about sociology applies also to agrarian study. Thus it can be said that the unsatisfactory state of agrarian study derives from 'the lack of balance and mutual stimulation between theory and description'.<sup>101</sup> Description is often meaningless because it is not guided by a theoretical perspective and theory-construction has been sterile because it is not informed and sustained by a grasp of the empirical situation.

Attention should be drawn here at this stage to certain inappropriate and erroneous ways of combining a theoretical orientation with empiricism. In many studies the distinction between *descriptive* categories and *analytical* categories is overlooked which often results in the error of 'misplaced concreteness'. Analytical categories are based on abstraction from reality and are not constructed with a view to describing reality. From this standpoint 'class' is an analytical category while 'caste' is a descriptive category. It is perhaps possible to secure answers from people about their *caste status* but not about their *class status* at the village level. One finds at the concrete level overlapping and mixed categories rather than 'pure' class formations. This does not invalidate the concept of class; this only means that it is futile to attempt class analysis at the village level. Class is not a tool of investigation at the village level. It is a tool of analysis at the macro level. Many Marxists who try to conduct class analysis of the agrarian structure at the village level are thus guilty of the error of 'misplaced concreteness'. This raises the question of the relation of descriptive categories and analytical categories. Does it mean then that descriptive categories have no utility for analytical purposes? No, it only means that descriptive categories and analytical categories are not identical. But for modifying and re-

100. Amit Bhaduri, "Study in Agricultural Backwardness Under Semi-feudalism", *The Economic Journal*, Vol. 83, No. 329, March 1973.

101. Stanislaw Andreski, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

formulating analytical categories it is necessary to grasp those specificities of economic structures in different situations which are embodied in descriptive categories.

In the remaining part we shall try to elaborate the observations made above by certain examples from recent agrarian studies. Before we attempt this it is necessary first to draw attention to the process of examination of concepts, categories and theories taken over from the Western countries which has begun in the recent period. The initiative for their reappraisal from the standpoint of the requirements of underdeveloped countries like India has so far come primarily from leading social scientists in the Western world. This may well serve as a starting-point but this process of reappraisal cannot bear fruit if it is not carried forward by the social scientists of the underdeveloped countries themselves on the basis of an ever-growing empirical knowledge about their own countries.

We draw attention first to the attempts made by a number of scholars to suggest an approach for the study of the agrarian structure and to formulate hypotheses about the causal relationship between agrarian structure and economic development. The strength and the weakness of these attempts should be noted. These attempts made a significant advance in terms of suggesting a methodology and of offering a perspective for the analysis of the agrarian structure. This was a good starting-point for theoretical and empirical studies of the Indian agrarian structure. The main weakness of these attempts was that they were made on the basis of an understanding of the role of agrarian structure in economic development of Western countries or of Russia and Japan. These interpretations did not emerge either out of a serious theoretical reflection with reference to India or out of an authentic empirical knowledge of the Indian situation. These interpretations therefore represented an initial effort full of gaps and inadequacies.

At the methodological level, for instance, attempts made by Myrdal in his *Economic Theory and Underdeveloped Regions* and in his *Asian Drama*, to formulate an institutional approach and to apply it to the Indian situation were of great significance. They presented a new approach and raised important questions in this broad field. The most significant departure that Myrdal made was in the following respects.

(a) Myrdal rejected a single factor approach through his formulation: the essence of a social problem is that it concerns a complex of interlocking, circular and cumulative changes'. (b) He demonstrated the fallacy of the distinction between economic and non-economic factors and argued that non-economic factors were as important for economic development as economic factors. (c) In particular he showed how land reform contributed to economic development not only through its direct impact on the system of ownership and operation of land but also through its indirect effects on the social structure, power-balance and the value system. (d) In his *Asian Drama* Myrdal tried to substantiate his hypotheses also with some empirical

observations. But while breaking new ground on the plane of methodology and approach Myrdal failed to break new ground on the plane of empirical study. His model of analysis of economic stagnation in terms of structural factors was relevant at best only to the ex-Zamindari and ex-Jagirdari regions of the country and not to the ex-Raiyatwari regions. Even in relation to the ex-Zamindari and ex-Jagirdari regions, the model suffered from serious gaps specially as it did not explore the role of the credit structure, the landlord-dominated power balance and the technological backwardness in perpetuating the retrogressive agrarian structure. These deficiencies of Myrdal's analysis were due to two main reasons. In the first place in the absence of economic historical studies of the evolution of the Indian agrarian structure in different periods of Indian history, Myrdal does not fully take into account some of the peculiarities of the Indian agrarian structure. These peculiarities were not present in Western feudalism but were very much marked in the 'implanted feudalism' of countries like India. The most important feature acting as a 'built-in depressor' in the Indian agrarian system has been its parasitical nature. Parasitism<sup>102</sup> distinguished the Indian type of landlordism even from the Japanese type, the latter being marked by some degree of enlightenment and responsiveness to developmental tasks.

In the second place Myrdal does not also take account of the regional variations *within* India. On the one hand there are regions like West Bengal where parasitic landlordism is reinforced by upper caste dominance and rural-urban cleavage. There are on the other hand regions like the Punjab, where tenant cultivation is combined with dominance of non-parasitical peasant castes and complementarity between the rural and the urban economy. The failure to explore data relating to regional socio-economic variations leads Myrdal to ignore the existence of *regional agrarian systems* and to fit the Indian agrarian situation into a single ideal type of parasitic landlordism.

Myrdal's analysis is thus inadequate as it is not based on sufficient empirical data. His prognosis is also defective specially in respect of his assessment of the non-responsiveness of the agrarian structure to introduction of technological change in all parts of the country. The view that technological change can occur only through a reorganisation of the agrarian relations may have some validity for the type of agrarian structure dominated by parasitic landlordism as in West Bengal and Bihar. It did not have much validity for the type of agrarian structure where the peasant did not suffer from all the corrosive effects of landlordism and was responsive to technological progress.

102. For the concept of parasitism, see: (i) Stanislav Andreski, *op. cit.*, Part VI, pp. 227-250; (ii) P.C. Joshi, "The Cultural Dimension of Economic Development: Past Experience and Tasks Ahead", in Satish Saberwal (ed.), *Towards a Cultural Policy for India*, Vikas, Delhi, 1974.

Myrdal's analysis is also open to criticism on another ground. Myrdal belongs to that school of economists who have treated the agrarian structure as an *independent* factor and then analysed its impact on economic and social development. In very few studies the agrarian structure is treated as a *dependent* factor, itself conditioned by the populational pressure, state of technology, the level of economic development and degree of social-political consciousness and organisation. In other words, no doubt agrarian structure retards technological growth but technological backwardness in turn also perpetuates the backwardness of the agrarian structure. To emphasise only one-way-causation is to ignore the 'cumulative' nature of causation so much emphasised by Myrdal himself at the level of approach and methodology. This model of cumulative causation offers many-sided possibilities of policy intervention which are overlooked if one is concentrating only on one-way-causation. For instance, one of the reasons why landlordism does not act as a 'built-in depressor' in the agrarian economy of the Punjab is that here the credit system is not an adjunct of the land system and that here the small peasant has independent access to credit in the form of remittances from migrant members of the family working in the non-agricultural sector outside the village. Similarly the existence of a strong cooperative credit structure in Maharashtra and Tamilnadu also neutralises to some extent the growth-retarding effects of landlordism. The building up of a credit structure independent of the landed interests thus offers possibilities of neutralising the negative effects of landlordism.

We have mentioned Myrdal's work as representative of the type of work based on hypothesis-building unsupported by direct knowledge of the field situation and an understanding of Indian agrarian history. This is not to underestimate Myrdal's contribution which is that of a pioneer in many ways. This is to emphasise that, to use Andreski's words, 'theorising from above'<sup>103</sup> even by a brilliant economist does not take one very far. It does not offer a comprehensive and deep understanding of the agrarian system. It is only when theorising from above is combined with *observation from below* that fresh ground can be broken in terms of offering new insights into the agrarian structure.

Reference can be made also to Doreen Warriner's work who uses the Nurksian analytical framework of the 'vicious circle' and 'lopsided economy' for analysis of the agrarian structure in relation to economic development. But she too does not go very far in exploring and identifying the variety of the patterns of agrarian structures in India and the variations in the degree of their responsiveness to technological change and economic development.

No doubt Myrdal, Doreen Warriner and many other economists are aware of the relationship of land relations to the nature of the power structure, of the population factor and of the non-agricultural sector of the eco-

nomy. But how the variations of the land relations in different regions are conditioned by the variations in these factors is a question not explored by them adequately. It is important to note that insights on this question are important primarily from the point of view of evolving a strategy of land reforms. After certain changes in agrarian structure have been identified as crucial for agricultural transformation, the next question is that of a strategy for achieving these desired changes. And here the question of combining *direct attack* on the land system with *indirect intervention* through other economic and social policies like technological growth, provision of alternative sources of credit, promotion of literacy and education, expansion of employment and strengthening of organisation of rural poor needs to be explored. In this respect regions characterised by the dominance of landlordism can benefit from knowledge of the factors which have helped to erode retrogressive forms of landlordism in the relatively dynamic regions of the country.

It should not be ignored that the institutionalists in the earlier phase considered any consideration of technological change as irrelevant so long as changes in the institutional framework had not been brought about. The experience of dynamic regions shows that the question of using appropriate types of technological change as a factor favourable to land reform and agrarian reorganisation deserves serious attention by institutional economists. In concrete terms, the choice between tractorisation and private tube-well-oriented, labour-saving pattern of technological progress on the one hand and cheap water and input intensification-oriented, land-augmenting type of technological progress on the other is a choice to which the institutional economist advocating land reforms cannot remain at all indifferent. If creation of labour scarcity is a factor favourable to elimination of discrepancy between ownership and operation of land, then what choices of techniques are made by planners is a matter of concern, and not of indifference, to the institutional economists interested in land reforms. Similarly whether the educational system continues to be top-heavy and biased in favour of higher education or whether it is restructured in favour of literacy, primary and secondary education—this choice has a considerable bearing on whether social processes operate in the direction of supporting absenteeism or self-cultivation, domination of politics by lobbies of rentiers and kulaks or by small peasant and agricultural labour associations. In short, the institutional economists supporting radical changes in the agrarian structure have in the past been concerned exclusively with *direct attack* on the land relations. They have not explored the possibilities of change in the agrarian structure *indirectly* through intervention at other critical points in the economy and society.

Considered from this standpoint the question of changing the agrarian structure is not merely a question of legislating for land reforms but a broader one of reorienting the entire gamut of technological, economic, social, edu-

cational and political policies in the direction of rationalisation of the agrarian structure. This perspective widens the possibilities of reorganising the agrarian structure. It also throws up new questions for land reforms studies in the light of empirical knowledge of the economy, society and polity in different regions of the country during the past twenty-five years. Moreover, it opens up the prospects of new insights through comparative studies of agrarian change and economic development in different Asian countries.

In the recent period new contributions have been made to the study of agrarian structure and economic development which have yielded better insights and understanding of this question than before. These break fresh ground in four important respects:

- (1) In the first place mere 'theorising from above' has been replaced by a blending of abstract reasoning and model-building with *observation from below*. The desire of the analysts and theorists not to leave field work to others but to become field workers themselves at the very beginning of their enquiry is a development the significance of which cannot be exaggerated for good economic analysis.
- (2) Secondly, in the earlier phase many research workers began with the ambition of constructing a grand or total view of the Indian agrarian structure. That is why the preference for grand concepts like 'feudalism' and 'capitalism' or grand frameworks like 'transition from feudalism to capitalism'. Today it is being recognised that enormous groundwork has to be done before the construction of a grand view may become possible. Thus formulation of smaller problems (e.g. the changing forms and magnitude of tenancy, and middle range theorisation is now in vogue which is a good development. This takes the economist closer to one major lesson of the history of science that 'in all the sciences theorising proceeded from lesser to greater generality' (Stanislav Andreski, *op. cit.*).
- (3) Thirdly, in place of studies trying to generalise for the whole country, we have now more *regional* studies which try to evolve generalisations for specific regions on the basis of data pertaining to that particular region. As a result, we have for the first time an insight into some concrete forms which variations of the agrarian structure assume in backward regions like West Bengal and Bihar and dynamic regions like the Punjab and Andhra Pradesh.
- (4) Fourthly, the explorations into the agrarian structure now take account not only of the influence that it exercises on processes of stagnation or growth; they also explore how agrarian structure is itself influenced by changes in other economic, social and political variables. As a result of these new trends, instead of the facts being adjusted to suit the conceptual framework or models of analysis as sometimes happened in the past, the latter are being modified or revised in response to the demands of new facts. This

is helpful for conceptual innovations. It is yielding new insights which have far-reaching implications also for policy.

As illustrations of these new types of regional studies one may refer to Amit Bhaduri's study on 'Study in Agricultural Backwardness under Semi-feudalism', to Pradhan H. Prasad's study on the constraints of 'semi-feudal production relations' on agricultural development in Bihar,<sup>104</sup> to the studies by M.L. Dantwala, C.H. Shah and V.M. Rao of the agrarian structure in a Raiyatwari region,<sup>105</sup> to the studies on tenancy relating to commercialised regions by C.H. Hanumantha Rao and V.S. Vyas<sup>106</sup> etc. All these represent a new harvest of insights into the specificities of the agrarian structure achieved through application of new research technologies. V.M. Rao's highly perceptive paper on 'Two Perspectives on Land Redistribution'<sup>107</sup> also represents an entirely new type of research work based on intensive examination of data relating to a particular area on the one hand and an imaginative, non-doctrinaire approach to the problem on the other. In V.M. Rao's own words, 'the measurement of the scope for redistribution calls for far more patience in collecting data and ingenuity in analysing them than are involved in cursory calculations based on distribution of land in a region or a State'.<sup>108</sup> Similarly, the analysis of land transfers and of the land market in a Raiyatwari region contributed by V.M. Rao breaks fresh ground in terms of both a new problem and a new methodology.

These recent contributions indicate that regional studies offer the greatest scope for useful work in the field of agrarian structure and economic development. They also show that the greater is the participation of the economist himself in the process of data collection, its processing and tabulation, the greater is his grasp over the totality of a situation in a particular area, specially over its *qualitative* aspects, and the better the quality of economic analysis in terms of its explanatory power.

Many of the studies in the past showed how little does an economist contribute in terms of understanding of economic problems of the agricultural sector even if he has solid grounding in theory and in tools and techniques but has no feel of the agricultural economy derived from field work and prolonged reflection. Some recent studies show how much an

104. Pradhan H. Prasad, "Production Relations: Achilles Heel of Indian Planning", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. VIII, No. 19, May 12, 1973.

105. (i) M.L. Dantwala and C.H. Shah, *Evaluation of Land Reforms*, Vol. I, Department of Economics, Bombay University, Bombay, 1971; (ii) V.M. Rao, "Land Transfers: Findings in a Ryotwari Region", *Economic and Political Weekly*, September 1972.

106. (i) V.S. Vyas, "Tenancy in a Dynamic Setting", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. V, No. 26, June 1970. (ii) C.H. Hanumantha Rao, "Uncertainty Entrepreneurship and Share Cropping in India", *Journal of Political Economy*, May-June 1971.

107. V.M. Rao, "Two Perspectives on Land Redistribution in India", *Economic and Political Weekly*, March 1974.

108. *Ibid.*, p. A2.

economist can extract from his empirical material even without much rigorous theoretical training if imaginative use of data is combined with capacity to ask relevant questions, with willingness to draw upon other disciplines, and, above all, with some field work experience.

Recent experience thus underlines the necessity of *monographic studies* of regional agrarian structures. The specificity of each region can be explored through monographic studies which help to verify generalisations made on the basis of experience of other countries. Data for these studies should be collected by both participant observation and the interview method. The more the monographic studies, the greater the scope for comparative-analytical studies of different regions. In spite of the fact that so many talented scholars have taken up the study of agrarian structure in West Bengal, we do not yet have a single monographical study of share-cropping in West Bengal villages. That is also the case in many other States for which we do not have any monographs on, say, the growth of the land market, specially under the impact of technological change; on the changing patterns of tenancy (specially of the character and magnitude of 'concealed tenancy'); on the socio-economic forms of labour employment in different types of farms and on the growth of labour market in agriculture (specially of migrating labour force); and on cost-sharing practices between landlords and tenants etc. What impact do population growth and migration have on the patterns of ownership and size of cultivated land holdings has perhaps never been empirically explored for any region of the country. The importance of monographic studies on this problem therefore cannot be over-emphasised. The impact of migration on the agrarian structure raises important problems relevant for an understanding of processes of economic growth or economic retrogression. For instance, in areas like the Punjab migration contributes to capital accumulation in agriculture as well as to formation of human capital. In areas like east U.P. it promotes the opposite tendencies of conspicuous consumption and drain of human resources.

In the recent period, apart from land reform, other forces are at work—like urbanisation, industrialisation, new technology in agriculture, changes in cropping pattern etc.—which are bringing about changes in the agrarian structure. These changes need to be identified and their influence on economic development explored. What needs specially to be examined is the nature of land transfers that are coming about as a result of the working of the market forces. Is the land market causing a circulation of land within the top landowners themselves? Or is it causing a shift from the top to the middle levels or even to the lower levels of the agrarian hierarchy? What are the prospects for influencing the operation of the land market in favour of the poor peasants through provision of cheap credit from nationalised banks for purchase of land? Not much empirical work has been done on these questions. Some of these aspects were investigated by Karunamoy Mukherjee for West Bengal in the earlier period. Such studies of land trans-

fers have to be done for different regions of the country.

The question of small and marginal cultivators operating uneconomic holdings also needs a thorough empirical examination on the basis of data from different parts of the country. To what extent the number and population of such marginal farmers has been increasing as a result of population growth, the operation of growing commercialisation and of the process of technological change associated with dynamic and scientific agriculture. Dandekar and Rath in their *Poverty in India* and A.M. Khusro in his *Economics of Land Reform and Farm Size* have attempted to examine the nature and magnitude of this problem but fresh and more authentic regional data are necessary for further work on the subject. In fact, both the nature and magnitude of the problem present great variations as between regions like the Punjab and Maharashtra on the one hand and West Bengal, Bihar and eastern U.P. on the other. The prospects of proletarianisation of marginal farmers as a sequel to capitalist growth in agriculture and the scope of population transfer from agriculture to non-agriculture as a solution to the problem of these uprooted marginal cultivators are two important problems which are emerging as politically significant areas for scientific investigation. To what extent land redistribution programmes either through land reforms or through land reclamation offer solutions to this problem of marginal farmers and landless labourers in different regions? An examination of the scope of rural works programmes for the problem of marginal farmers also deserves serious investigation. What scope exists for land reclamation and development of new colonies (as in the Tarai region of U.P.) to rehabilitate the marginal farmers and landless also needs concrete examination with reference to each region. This question has been raised by many scholars including A.M. Khusro.

The colonisation of new areas associated with the successful completion of major irrigation projects (like Nagarjunsagar, Kosi, Ganganagar and Hirakud projects) in many parts of the country deserve special study from the point of view of the rehabilitation of small and marginal farmers and landless persons. It has been reported from many areas that much before the actual colonisation of these areas begins, the enterprising sections from already developed agricultural regions of other States begin land purchases on a large scale. By the time the actual colonisation begins land values begin to shoot up with the result that such areas become inaccessible for the poorer sections from these States where these colonies are located. These new colonies therefore offer interesting problems for research. These include the problem of land purchase and land transfers, the problem of entrepreneurship and new colonisation and of the role of nationalised banks and other credit agencies in financing land purchases.

The economic and political role of land reforms may itself vary from region to region. In those regions specially where even the power structure—political parties, civil service, education and other State agencies—are domi-

nated by landed interests, land reform may appear necessary even for creating a 'civil society' and 'political society' independent from the influence of landed interests.

An important pre-condition for any kind of useful work on the subject of agrarian structure seems to be the availability of a wealth of primary data on this subject. In fact, division of the country into certain identifiable agrarian regions is an important task before social scientists in India. In this respect it is pertinent to recall an important research proposal made by Daniel Thorner some years back regarding the preparation of 'An Agrarian Handbook for India'.<sup>109</sup> This proposal has yet to be implemented. What Thorner had in mind was a guide book or handbook on the pattern of the agrarian relationships in the different regions of the country. It would be prepared after wading through the jungle of revenue, legal and administrative terms pertaining to land and land holding in different geographical and linguistic regions of India. He had suggested that the first step was to collect together all the terms pertaining to agrarian relationships in India and then to introduce some order into them. These terms could be grouped analytically into five heads: proprietary interests in the land; tenancy interests in the land and forms of rent payment; patterns of share cropping; types of free agricultural labourers; and, lastly, bonded or attached farm servants. Thorner also suggested that the purpose of the handbook was not statistical or quantitative. It was to be primarily qualitative i.e. 'aiming to disclose the basic types of agrarian relationships in the country, and to arrange the various rights in the land in a scale from the higher proprietary interests to the lower tenancies and share-cropping arrangements, so that like can be grouped with like and unlike separated from unlike'. The preparation of the handbook thus involved careful refinement of the raw data which constituted the heart of the work. This task which is inter-disciplinary by nature can now be undertaken when the country has acquired more resources and experience for data collection and compilation.

Finally, considering the agrarian structure from a dynamic standpoint the most important question for scientific enquiry seems now to be the future of Asian peasant economy in the context of technological change and economic development. Is the disintegration of the peasant economy and its replacement by a capitalist economy inevitable? Or whether through appropriate institutional and other devices the peasant economy can be protected and utilised as a framework of agricultural transformation? These are important questions for scientific enquiry. The question of peasant agriculture as the institutional framework of agricultural transformation in countries like India has been sharply posed by V.K.R.V. Rao in his work *Growth with Justice in Asian Agriculture* (1974).

In this connexion one can also present for study by Indian economists

109. Daniel Thorner, *op. cit.*

the proposal made by the Japanese agricultural economist, Shigeru Ishikawa. He first suggested how the 'new strategy for agriculture' introduced within the framework of the old agrarian structure may have created a twofold problem: (1) 'it may create or increase social tension at least temporarily, and (2) since the modern inputs are cash intensive it may increase agriculture's claims for centralised funds at the sacrifice of the non-agricultural modern sector.' Ishikawa therefore calls for an alternative in terms of 'trying to create an agrarian system in which both profitability and collective welfare work as complementary motivating forces for agricultural progress, and both the modern and the traditional inputs are used effectively and in a scientific manner'.<sup>110</sup> An examination of the types of changes in the agrarian structure required to achieve these aims therefore emerges as a crucial question for scientific enquiry.

If land reforms are directed towards creating the structure of a self-employed, owner-peasant agriculture, then what other conditions must be created to support this structure so that it fulfils the twin requirements of productivity and equity—this is one of the central questions facing Indian economists. For tackling this question the study of Indian conditions needs to be combined with the experience of countries like Japan and Taiwan where the highest levels of productivity have been achieved within the framework of small-peasant agriculture. Very often the viability and growth-promoting potentiality of small peasant agriculture is emphasised by some scholars on the basis of the performance of the small farms in Japan. This appreciation of the potentialities of small peasant farms in the Asian context represents a sharp departure from the conventional association of growth with large farms on the basis of past Western and Soviet experience. What is not generally emphasised, however, is the innovation of supporting institutional framework and technology which alone can transform small peasant farms into an agent of growth with social justice. Japanese agricultural history is significant not merely for the role of small farms in agricultural transformation but also for the role of supporting institutional and technological innovations and a high level of cultural development of the Japanese small farmers which was responsible for transforming subsistent farming by small peasantry into commercial farming. It is only by becoming a *commercial farmer* that the small peasant can meet the requirements of modern industrialisation. This is a challenge the implications of which are colossal in terms of technological progress, development of service cooperatives, cultural enlightenment, organisation of the human factor and non-farm employment. This implied equation of commercial agriculture with large size in J.N. Sinha's paper on 'Land Reform: A Dissenting View' is open to question. But his criticism of the tendency to uphold the Japanese experience without

110. Shigeru Ishikawa, *Agricultural Development Strategies in Asia*, The Asian Development Bank, 1970, pp. 116-117.

spelling out the full implications of the Japanese experience is worthy of note. The creation of small farm is only one part of this experience. This does not ensure by itself the creation of other requirements of growth which have to be independently created.

It would be appropriate to conclude this survey of studies on agrarian structure and economic development with some observations on contributions by sociologists and social anthropologists to this subject. As we have already indicated sociologists and social anthropologists can make useful contributions to the understanding of the agrarian social structure. Economists have now begun to appreciate the significance of non-economic dimensions of the economic structure. But they have seldom explored these non-economic dimensions in depth. For instance, in her recent book on *Land Reform in Principle and Practice* Doreen Warriner recognises the importance of caste in India's agrarian structure. She observes: 'The agrarian structure of India encloses a world of its own since it is neither a large estate nor a peasant system but a system of caste' (p. 141). This is a very penetrating statement made by an economist. But she has not elaborated this statement by drawing upon the insights available from field studies and by proposing further field studies.

Sociologists and social anthropologists can study the agrarian structure at both the macro and micro levels. Macro-sociological studies can provide a *dynamic, synthetic and comparative* view of the modernisation process in Asian societies as reflected at the level of the transformation of the agrarian structure. Social anthropological studies at the micro-level can contribute a wealth of insights into the variety and complexity of the changing agrarian social structure in different regions of the country. It should be emphasised that most often macro-sociological studies have either taken the form of general reflection or 'theorising from above' without adequate mastery over the insights provided by anthropological studies at the micro-levels. Such grand speculation at the macro-level has proved as sterile as a series of investigations at the micro-level without reference to a broader perspective provided by macro-sociology. It is one of the commonplaces of science that abstraction without reference to the concrete is as unproductive as concretisation without reference to an abstract framework.

What a social anthropologist like Srinivas has contributed at the micro-level to the understanding of caste has yet to be contributed by a social anthropologist to the understanding of the peasant economy. Some significant beginnings in this direction have been made by Ramkrishna Mukherjee in his studies of the agrarian social structure and its dynamics in Bengal villages,<sup>111</sup> by Bailey in his analysis of the land market and its impact on

111. (i) Ramkrishna Mukherjee, *Six Villages of Bengal: A Socio-economic Survey*, Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, 1958. (ii) Ramkrishna Mukherjee, *The Dynamics of a Rural Society*, Akademie-Verlag, Berlin, 1957.

social stratification in an Orissa village,<sup>112</sup> by A.C. Mayer in his *Land and Society in Malabar*, by Scarlet Epstein in her *Economic Development and Social Change in South India*, by Andre Beteille in his investigation into the agrarian social structure of a Tanjore village,<sup>113</sup> by Yogendra Singh in his study of land reforms and the power structure in east U.P.,<sup>114</sup> by Jan Breman in his study of *Patronage and Exploitation in South Gujarat*, by W.L. Rowe in 'Changing Rural Class Structure and the Jajmani System',<sup>115</sup> by H.P. Sharma in his study of 'Land Reforms in the Union Territory of Delhi',<sup>116</sup> by Kathleen Gough in her studies of the agrarian social structure in Tanjore,<sup>117</sup> by B.K. Roy Burman in his studies of the land problem among the tribals, by T.K. Oommen in his study of agrarian conflict in the Alleppey district of Kerala,<sup>118</sup> and by Anand Chakravarty in his book *Contradictions and Change—Emerging Patterns of Authority in a Rajasthan Village*.<sup>119</sup>

The impact of all these studies is, however, not very significant largely because the thoroughness with which social anthropologists have studied caste, kinship and the family has not yet been shown in the study of agrarian systems. Moreover, not many anthropologists studying agrarian structures at the village level have shown adequate awareness of the wider forces without which insights into the dynamics of the structure at the micro-level would always remain incomplete. One of the best of these works, Andre Beteille's *Studies in Agrarian Social Structure*, typifies the strength and limitations of the contributions by social anthropologists to the study of the agrarian problem in the recent period. Andre Beteille's merit lies in legitimising the study of the agrarian social structure while most social anthropologists have not considered it worthy of anthropological investigation. He also explores the relevance of the sociological concept of class for the study of the peasantry. But the weaknesses of this work should also be noted. It is not based on adequate blending of macro perspective with micro insights. This is because it lacks the empirical thoroughness and depth which was characteristic of the work of the earlier generation of social anthropologists. It is

112. F.G. Bailey, *Caste and the Economic Frontier*, Oxford University Press, India, 1958.

113. Andre Beteille, *Caste, Class and Power*, California University Press, Bombay, 1966.

114. Yogendra Singh, *op. cit.*

115. W.L. Rowe, "Changing Rural Class Structure and the Jajmani System", *Human Organisation*, Vol. 22, Number 1, Spring 1963.

116. H.P. Sharma, "Land Reforms in a Village in the Union Territory of Delhi", in M.S. Gore (ed.), *Problems of Rural Change*, Delhi School of Social Work, Delhi, 1963.

117. K. Gough, "The Social Structure of a Tanjore Village", in M. Marriott (ed.), *Village India*, Asia Publishing House, Delhi, 1961.

118. T.K. Oommen, "Agrarian Conflict in Alleppey District", *Indian Journal of Industrial Relations*, New Delhi, 1971.

119. Anand K. Chakravarty, *Contradictions and Change, Emerging Patterns of Authority in a Rajasthan Village*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1974 (forthcoming).

also based on inadequate grasp of historical data, of geographical heterogeneity and of wider politico-economic processes which are indispensable for a solid macro-sociological study. It is another example of 'generalising from above' with scanty observation from below. (Andre Beteille's observation from below is restricted to some Tanjore villages and he is at his best in his analysis of the Tanjore agrarian situation.) Further what was expected from an anthropologist was an exploration of the relation between caste, kinship and family on the one hand and the land system on the other which is by and large lacking in this work. Andre Beteille's work is a dramatic illustration of the hard fact that intelligence, imagination and elegance of style are no substitutes for first-hand field-work and extensive wading through secondary data for a number of years with reference to as many regions as possible. Even the most gifted and daring scholar writing on India as a whole must keep in view the vastness of the country and therefore the immensity of the intellectual task of studying the Indian land system. The study of the agrarian structure is the subject least suited for 'ivory tower' research and reflection, partly because of the absence of secondary data on basic issues for many regions and partly because the social scientist in India suffers from basic deficiencies arising from his wholly urban and upper middle class background.]

One of the major fields in which sociologists and social anthropologists can throw new light is that of the role of land in the value system, in systems of social stratification, in social relations and in the power structure for both backward and the dynamic regions in India.

The study of peasant and non-peasant castes in the context of the development of an economic ethic (specially of entrepreneurship) is one of the most promising areas for sociological enquiry.

Similarly, the study of agrarian unrest and peasant revolutions is a field which cannot be tackled without a sociological perspective. In particular the consequences of technological changes on the traditional social structure and values of peasant societies, and the tensions and conflicts generated by techno-economic processes is a task to which a significant contribution can be made by sociology and social anthropology.

It is necessary here to emphasise the importance of economic history for the understanding of the agrarian structure since independence. Knowledge of what happened to the agrarian structure during British rule in different regions is crucial for an understanding of agrarian structure after the end of British rule. Here what Irfan Habib has contributed to the understanding of the agrarian system in Moghul India in terms of both fresh data and insights has yet to be contributed by an economic historian or a group of economic historians for India under British rule. Further, agrarian history of the British period requires a blending of economic and social history. Some indication of the possibilities of combining economic with social history is provided by the study by Dharma Kumar on caste and land in

Madras Presidency in south India. Even though Indian history is so rich in peasant struggles and movements, no Indian social and economic historian has been able to produce so far a work like E.J. Hobsbawm's *Primitive Rebels* comprising studies of archaic forms of social movement in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Apart from sociology, social anthropology and economic history, the discipline which is most relevant for the study of the agrarian structure and which has been tapped the least for this purpose is geography, specially human geography. The study of the interaction of the physical environment and the modes of production in the broadest sense which is the concern of human geography has gone by default in India. The study of the regional patterns of development which are closely related to the patterns of the agrarian social structure is another aspect of the same problem which calls for inter-disciplinary collaboration between economists, sociologists, social anthropologists, geographers and agronomists.

It should be noted that scientific enquiry into the land problem requires both *analysis* and *synthesis*. The task of analysis is that of exploring in depth specific aspects of this larger problem through the aid of separate disciplines and through questions derived from a preliminary macro view of the problem. The task of synthesis is that of re-examining the preliminary view in this new light and of re-integrating the numerous insights and findings offered by analysis into a broad perspective of the problem under investigation. Analysis without reference to a synthetic view is as inadequate as synthesising without analysis in depth. Without such analysis of concrete situations synthesising becomes what has earlier been called sterile 'theorising from above'. The social scientist has to acquire as it were the skills of a watchmaker who can break up the watch into its separate parts and then re-assemble it to make a functioning whole. The social scientist can perform this role with the same competence as that of a watchmaker if he knows the art of combining the *specific* with the *general*. This calls for an entirely different type of expertise in both description and theoretical speculation than what has so far been shown by Indian scholars.

## CHAPTER VII

### EVALUATION OF LAND REFORMS

IT HAS BEEN INDICATED earlier that changes in agrarian structure are broadly of two types. To the first category belong those changes in agrarian relations which occur in an *indirect* manner in response to spontaneous operation of socio-economic processes. Such, for instance, are certain changes in agrarian structure (e.g. emergence of business tenancy) which are induced changes in agricultural technology. The second type of changes are those which are brought about as a result of *direct* intervention in the agrarian structure. This direct intervention may assume the form of land legislation and its implementation by governmental agencies. It may also assume the form of social action in defiance of or without reference to governmental action. All these types of attempts to alter the agrarian structure *directly* can be characterised as land reforms.

There are three points which should be noted in this connexion. Firstly, we are not distinguishing here between *planned* and *unplanned* changes but between *directly effected* or *indirectly induced* changes. Even some of the indirectly induced changes may be planned in the sense that on the basis of a knowledge of the processes of change, policy-makers and planners may opt for a strategy of inducing changes in the agrarian structure indirectly rather than of trying to effect them directly. In this sense indirectly promoted changes may be as planned as directly effected changes, though all indirectly effected changes are not planned changes.

It should be noted that in the past social scientists have mostly concentrated on the study of planned changes through direct intervention on the agrarian structure. They have not systematically explored the scope of promoting changes in the agrarian structure indirectly through direct influence on such other factors in the social system as technology, the credit structure, or the extent of non-agricultural employment.

The second point to note is that attempts at directly influencing the agrarian structure have both intended and unintended, desirable and undesirable, consequences. The method of direct intervention in the sphere of land relations is in this context not necessarily a self-sufficient method of effecting changes in the agrarian structure. For example, the very announcement of the slogan of 'land to the tiller' may create panic among the landlords and induce them to sell or partition their land or may lead to *benami* transactions on a wide scale. In this case government action with a view to providing security may itself set in motion counter-acting processes like evictions of tenants which are not conducive to the objective of security of tenure. One has therefore to distinguish between 'effective' action for

changing the agrarian structure in the desired direction on the one hand and 'ineffective' action on the other.

Thirdly, measures for direct intervention on the agrarian structure can be undertaken by governmental as well as by non-governmental agencies. It would be wrong to consider governmental action alone as constitutional and non-governmental action as extra-constitutional or unconstitutional. In view of the experience of unintended and undesirable consequences of direct governmental intervention on agrarian structure, it is not only appropriate but imperative that the question of supporting governmental action through active role of non-governmental agencies should be provided constitutional legitimacy. Experience has shown that this is one of the most important ways of ensuring 'effective' land reforms or of reducing the scale of unintended and undesirable consequences of land reforms.

Here the distinction between the *state* and the *government* should be borne in mind, the former being a much broader concept than the latter. The concept of a democratic state in countries like India is based on the normative principle of multi-class alliance and the rejection of the notion of dominance of one or a few powerful classes. But at a particular point of time the concept of state and the actual structure and functioning of the government may be in sharp conflict. On account of the weakness of the underprivileged classes in terms of level of consciousness and organisation, governmental structure and functioning may reflect dominance of one or few privileged classes. In this situation action by non-governmental agencies with a view to correcting the distortions in the structure and functioning of governmental agencies may assume the form of defiance of the government or of indifference to the government. Such action has full constitutional legitimacy and is fully consistent with the conception of a democratic state. This conceptual framework which has seldom been employed by social scientists in India has great relevance for the scientific analysis of such a vital problem as that of land reforms.

In India after independence attempts to alter directly the pattern of distribution of land holdings assumed the form of four types of experiments. These experiments in land reforms were as follows:

1. Land reform 'from above' through land legislation on the lines broadly indicated by the Central government, enacted by the State legislatures, and, finally, implemented by agencies of the State governments.
2. Land reform through militant peasant action 'from below' as in the case mainly of Telengana and Naxalbari movements and also to some extent in the case of the 'land grab' movement.
3. Land reform through legislative enactments 'from above' combined with peasant mobilisation 'from below' as in the case of the 'controlled land seizure' in West Bengal under the United Front regime and of protection of poor peasants in Kerala under the Congress-

supported CPI ministry.

4. Land reform 'from below' through persuasion of landlords and peaceful pressure by peasants as in the case of Bhoodan and Gramdan.

One of the basic gaps in land reform studies in India is that professional social scientists have devoted most of their attention to the evaluation of land reforms legislation and its implementation. The remaining three types of experiments have either received scant attention or no attention from social scientists. Some sociologists (like T.K. Oommen and Partha Mukherjee) have taken up the study of Bhoodan and Gramdan. But their studies explore these movements as social movements rather than as experiments in land reforms. Few economists have perhaps undertaken empirical studies of Bhoodan and Gramdan. In his Presidential address on *Agrarian Reform* to the Fifteenth Conference of the Indian Society of Agricultural Economics in December 1954, D.R. Gadgil observed that Bhoodan movement was 'so original in its conception, so novel in its methods, and so revolutionary as to its objectives that special effort has to be made to understand it and to place it into proper perspective'.<sup>120</sup> A number of points for study in depth were offered by Gadgil which were hardly pursued by any economist on the basis of village level enquiries in *Bhoodani* and *Gramdani* villages. We do not, therefore, have an authentic account of what kind of impact did the movement have on the psychology and outlook of the landlords on the one hand and tenants on the other, nor do we have empirical knowledge of its actual impact on the pattern of distribution of land holdings on an immediate as well as a long-term basis.

Land reforms experiments of the second and third type also have remained generally unexplored by the professional social scientists and specially by the economists. It is noteworthy that Gadgil's Presidential address in 1954 to which we made reference just now does not even mention the Telengana struggle, though it takes full cognizance of Bhoodan. What is, however, most surprising is that the leaders of the Left movement have also not found it necessary or possible to make their intellectual cadres and supporters interested in the study of the Telengana and the Tebhaga movements which represented the most important peasant upheavals in India at the time of independence. Books by Sundarayya<sup>121</sup> and Sunil Sen<sup>122</sup> no doubt make a good beginning but they do not offer an analysis of the Telengana and Tebhaga struggles from the point of view of their immediate and long-term impact on agrarian society in general and agrarian relations in

120. D. R. Gadgil, "Agrarian Reform", *Planning and Economic Policy in India*, Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, Poona, 1972.

121. P. Sundarayya, *Telengana People's Struggle and its Lessons*, Communist Party of India, Calcutta, December 1972.

122. Sunil Sen, *Agrarian Struggle in Bengal 1946-47*, People's Publishing House, Delhi, 1972.

particular in the Telengana and Bengal villages. Let alone these Tebhaga and Telengana movements which occurred during the early years of independence, scholars have not even studied in depth such recent movements as the seizure of about 300,000 acres of *benami* land from landlords by peasants under the protection of the United Front regime in West Bengal. Nor have they studied the consequences of the 'land grab' movement launched by the CPI in 1969-71. Similarly, numerous success stories of land to the tiller through joint efforts of the government and non-government agencies in many other areas like Kerala, Maharashtra and parts of U.P. have also remained unreported and outside the scope of scientific enquiry.

It must be noted that, apart from other factors, the haunting apprehension of the emergence of many more Telenganas in other areas of agrarian distress in the country was one of the basic factors responsible for enhancing the political acceptability of the concept of land reforms through legislation in India. In fact the *U.P. Zamindari Abolition Committee Report* which was the first report on the agrarian question in India after independence, recognised the gravity of the agrarian situation in different parts of India. It said in unambiguous terms that 'if abolition [of Zamindari] is held over for a few years, abolition may mean expropriation without compensation, and quite possibly bloodshed and violence'<sup>123</sup> In support of immediate land legislation it quoted the famous words of J. Laski: 'To the threat of revolution, there is historically only one answer, viz., the reforms that give hope and exhilaration to those to whom the revolution otherwise makes an irresistible appeal.'<sup>124</sup>

The sweep and momentum of land legislation during the early years of independence can be partly attributed to the shock Telengana administered to the political elite and landed interests (see Sundarayya, *op. cit.*, p. 3). Similarly, the rise of Naxalism and the threat posed by it in the late sixties was one of the main factors responsible for the sense of urgency with which the ruling elite revived the question of land reforms during the close of the sixties and the beginning of the seventies. This is fully borne out by the *Report on the Current Agrarian Tension* released by the Ministry of Home Affairs in December 1969. The report underlined the unsatisfactory nature of the agrarian structure as the main cause of the agrarian tension and called for urgent attention to land reforms in the interest of the rural poor. Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi herself stressed at the Chief Ministers' Conference on 26-27 September 1970: 'Land reform is the most crucial test which our political system must pass in order to survive.'<sup>125</sup>

123. *U.P. Zamindari Abolition Committee Report*, Vol. I, Allahabad, 1948, p. 358.

124. *Ibid.*, p. 358.

125. Indira Gandhi, "Inaugural Address", *Chief Ministers' Conference on Land Reforms*, 26-27 September 1970, Ministry of Food and Agriculture, Government of India, New Delhi.

It can be seen from the above that the stimulus to land legislation provided by extra-parliamentary forms of action for land redistribution from the rich to the poor is one of the most important aspects of India's agrarian history since independence.

Scholars undertaking land reform studies have not shown much awareness of this factor. Similarly, not much insight has been shown by scholars into how the widening gap between the land reforms legislation on the one hand and its ineffective implementation on the other has been one of the basic factors responsible for accentuating the tendencies towards extra-parliamentary attempts for achieving changes in the agrarian structure. The contradiction and complementarity between legislative and non-legislative, parliamentary and extra-parliamentary, governmental and non-governmental, action for land reforms in India since independence is one of the most interesting and important problem areas for scientific enquiry. In fact, *this dynamic interaction and interdependence of legislative and non-legislative forms of action for land reforms can in its totality be identified and characterised as the emerging Indian model of land reforms and agrarian transformation* on the basis of Indian experience during the past twenty-five years. This is a model of land reform not through a single revolutionary leap forward. Considered over a longer time span the disintegration of the old and the growth of a new agrarian system is related with legislative and non-legislative, parliamentary and extra-parliamentary, action following each other in quick succession. The extra-parliamentary action has created the possibilities of legislative action and the limitations of the legislative action have released forces for further extra-parliamentary action.

Land reforms studies in India which rely on the method of comparative statistics rather than the method of dynamic analysis, of narrow economic evaluation rather than politico-economic appraisal, have generally failed to portray this *process* of disintegration of the old and the emergence of the new system. An approach which does not explore *processes* of changes but which relies on exploring change through comparison over time of two *ideal-typical* models of agrarian structure thus misses the complexity of the *processes* of change. They have missed it because the 'before and after the land reforms' method of evaluating change does not grasp how the *forces of change* emerge and grow strong within a system. Further the methodology of taking not an integrated but an 'either-or' view of legislative or non-legislative methods results in seeing limitations and obstacles to change everywhere within the system without seeing how at crucial points the system is beginning to give in to new tendencies and forces.

The best example of seeing only limitations and not possibilities, of observing only resistance to change but not the emerging forces of change,

is provided by the *Report of the Task Force on Agrarian Relations*<sup>126</sup> released by the Planning Commission. This report is extremely valuable for its frank assessment of the obstacles to land reforms in India. But its analytical failure lies in its inability to produce any insight into how these obstacles can be overcome or are being overcome in certain regions and how the processes of change *can be consciously accelerated*. The land reform surveys sponsored by the Planning Commission and many other studies undertaken by academic agencies provide plenty of insights into *processes of change* which have been overlooked by this report and by most scholars writing on the agrarian question.

We draw attention here to those features of recent Indian agrarian history which gives us glimpses of possibilities of changing the agrarian structures. These are being highlighted here only as illustrations indicating scope for further analyses of Indian experience in depth. It may be repeated again that quite a lot of work on land reforms in India has assumed the form of generalising about obstacles to implementation of land legislation without adequate observation and exploration at the field level. Land reform studies have tended to highlight only one side of the picture as the dominant tendency of the Indian agrarian situation. They have only noticed the resistance by landowners to any change in the pattern of land ownership and control and overlooked the growing awareness among the deprived sections of the rural society and the slow and steady erosion of the unquestioned dominance of the landed classes. It is one thing to highlight the gap between actual accomplishment on the one hand and the possibilities of effecting changes or the requirements of a total transformation on the other. But it is quite another to see only *changelessness* where some change has occurred though not on the desired scale. What is more significant, areas of some perceptible change provide useful insights on the processes of change. On the basis of these insights forms of action can be devised so that areas of 'no change' or 'marginal change' can also be transformed into 'areas of perceptible change'.

In Daniel Thorner's *The Agrarian Prospect in India*<sup>127</sup> we find a classification of regions into (i) 'areas of least change', (ii) 'areas of some perceptible change', and (iii) 'areas of greatest change'. This was a very promising and fruitful line of enquiry, though from many later studies in land reforms it would appear as if all areas were areas of no change or of marginal change. A recent study called 'Class Nature of Land Reforms Since Independence' (Subas Chathopadhyaya, *Social Scientist*, Vol. 2, No. 4, November 1973) is a typical example of analysing the problem of agrarian reforms without either a historical or a regional approach and without identifying the *new*

126. *Report of the Task Force on Agrarian Relations*, Planning Commission, New Delhi, 1973 (mimeographed).

127. Daniel Thorner, *The Agrarian Prospect in India*, University Press, Delhi, 1956, p. 29.

elements in the rural situation. We shall try to illustrate with a concrete example that field view provides a corrective to excessive optimism as reflected in many official reports and to excessive pessimism as reflected in many non-official reports.

In his study of a Tanjore village Andre Beteille has presented certain basic insights having considerable significance for land reform and agrarian change in India. Two of these basic insights may be noted:

- (1) 'Ownership of land has shifted only in a small way from the old rentier class to the emerging class of farmers and owner-cultivators. Power on the other hand has shifted much more decisively from the traditional elite of the village into the hands of the new popular leaders.'<sup>128</sup>
- (2) 'One should not, however, emphasise too much the divergence between political and economic power. . . .

'Although numerical strength has become an increasingly important basis of power, by itself it does not count for very much. What is required in addition is organisation and in this regard people with some social and economic standing play an important part. Small tenants and landless labourers, and those who are on the borderline between them, have as yet very little power. Far from being able to manoeuvre for benefits and privileges they are generally not even able to get for themselves what they are entitled to by law.'<sup>129</sup>

These insights are extremely significant in so far as they convey a very realistic picture of the possibilities as well as the constraints of the new agrarian system that is taking the place of the old.

The dynamic element in the new social situation which offers considerable possibilities of change in the agrarian system is the *growing* independence of *power* from the influence of traditional landed interests. The factor which acts as a serious constraint on further changes in the agrarian system in the interest of the *haves-nots* is the lack of *organisation* among them. Organisation therefore appears as a decisive factor for further changes in the agrarian system.

Here is an example of an analysis which is neither 'pessimistic' nor 'optimistic' but which brings out both the possibilities and the constraints of the situation. It is to be noted that Beteille himself has not made adequate use of such insights while presenting a macro-view of the Indian agrarian social structure. As an analyst of the field situation in Tanjore villages Beteille has his feet firmly planted on the ground. But in his *Studies* he does not show the same grasp of the processes of change in other regions.

Let us now identify the factors emphasised by Daniel Thorner as favourable for creating a situation of the greatest change in some regions. Thorner

128. Andre Beteille, *Caste, Class and Power*, op. cit., p. 199.

129. *Ibid.*, pp. 204-205.

locates Kashmir and Andhra Pradesh as the areas of greatest change. He resists the temptation of attributing the agrarian changes in Kashmir to the land legislation alone and draws attention to 'unusual political circumstances of the valley since 1947 which gave stimulus to these changes'.<sup>130</sup> As regards Andhra Pradesh his observation is cryptic but very meaningful: 'In the State of Andhra peasant organisation in the prosperous zones appears to have been more effective than the reform legislation of other states.'<sup>131</sup>

The role of socio-political factors in the formulation and implementation of land legislation is also emphasised by A.M. Khusro for the Hyderabad region. Khusro observes:

'The implementation of tenancy legislation is a function of the degree of consciousness among the tenantry. It is clear that implementation has been much better in the more conscious Diwani areas than in the ex-jagir areas. It has also been better in Telengana than in Karnatak or Marathwada which exhibit on various grounds a smaller degree of consciousness.'<sup>132</sup>

G. Parthasarathy and B. Prasada Rao's study of implementation of land reforms in Andhra Pradesh also gives an insight into the possibilities and constraints of implementing land reforms.

'One cannot but be struck by the frustrating experience of tenants in Andhra Region. Courts helped to evict such of those tenants who fought for their rights. The fate of non-protected tenants in Telengana even with better conceived land legislation was no different. *The only silver lining in this otherwise gloomy record of land legislation is protected tenancy in Telengana region.*

'But even in this region the disturbed conditions, the peasant upheaval, and a firm and determined administration in the early fifties could make the creation of protected tenancy possible and ensure their survival. The fate of non-protected tenants in Telengana establishes beyond doubt that a sound legislation is only a necessary condition for achieving the object in view'<sup>133</sup> (emphasis added).

G. Parthasarathy has also made a study of legal disputes<sup>134</sup> which reveals the contrast between the Andhra region and the Telengana region. In Andhra region the applications filed by tenants were much smaller in number as compared to those filed by landlords. The decision of the courts were also mostly in favour of landlords. In fact, the study shows that the courts were more instrumental in evicting tenants than in providing them

130. Daniel Thorner, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

131. *Ibid.*, p. 53.

132. A.M. Khusro, *Economic and Social Effects of Jagirdari Abolition and Land Reforms in Hyderabad*, Osmania University, Hyderabad, 1958, p. 169.

133. G. Parthasarathy and B. Prasada Rao, *Implementation of Land Reform in Andhra Pradesh*, Scientific Book Agency, Calcutta, 1969, p. 330.

134. *Ibid.*, pp. 190-194.

protection and security. The picture in Telengana shows a situation markedly in favour of tenants. Why was the legislation more successful in Telengana than in the Andhra region? The study shows that the first reason was that the legislation had far less loopholes in Telengana than in Andhra. In fact, as the study observes, 'the Act itself provided requisite conditions for an atmosphere in which the tenant could feel more confident, the landlord less recalcitrant, the administration more effective and the courts more sympathetic towards the tenants' class'. Generalising from the Telengana experience the study shows that 'wide publicity of legislation in an intelligent form, legal aids, facilitating growth of tenant organisations and their recognition by giving representation to them in Tribunals, expeditious decisions by courts and vigilance in the maintenance of records (are) some of the important steps necessary'.

Parthasarathy's study brings out very effectively not only the successes and failures of land reforms but also the possibilities of increasing the scope of successes and reducing the scope of failures. The study derives its authenticity and realism from the fact that the analysis of specific cases of disputes and surveys of villages forms an important part of this study.

Dandekar's study identifies 'political and social power of the landlords' as the most important obstacle to implementing tenancy reforms. But even here, as Gadgil points out in the preface to Dandekar's report,<sup>135</sup> the situation is not uniform. It varies from region to region. And the understanding of regional variety gives an insight into real factors retarding or facilitating change.<sup>136</sup> In Gadgil's view the Act for protecting tenants has had greater effect in the *Konkan* 'because large number of *Konkani* landlords are absentee and habitually reside in towns and cities'. In the *Desh* district on the other hand the landlords succeeded in getting voluntary surrenders from tenants 'because the bulk of the landlord class is perhaps formed of the better-to-do among the body of peasants themselves'. Gadgil's observations provide very significant insights into processes of land reforms implementation. The implementation process is facilitated where the legislation affects a class of absentee landlords having no roots in the village society. It faces great resistance if the legislation affects the landed interests of the upper stratum of the peasantry itself. Means and methods which are adequate for coping with the first type of situation are inadequate for coping with the second type of situation.

These studies indirectly touch upon a very important aspect of the implementation process relating to the social character, composition and role of the administration. The important point to note is that the social character, composition and role of the administration is not the same in all regions.

135. V.M. Dandekar, *Working of Bombay Tenancy Act, 1948, Report of Investigation*, Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, Poona, 1957, p. IV.

136. *Ibid.*

There are old Jagirdari and Zamindari regions where the local administration was not independent of the land system for centuries. There are also the Raiyatwari areas where the existence of a professionalised administration which is relatively independent of the dominant landed groups is a factor more favourable to the process of implementation. Moreover, even within the same region the character of the administration has been undergoing a change howsoever slowly. In the earlier period even at the lower levels the recruitment, as Daniel Thorner points out, was entirely from the upper caste and landowning groups. With some growth of a new type of intelligentsia from the lower castes and classes the representation of have-nots in the administration has been increasing over time. This weight of the have-nots in administration would have increased much faster if literacy, primary and secondary education had progressed in the desired manner. Nevertheless, the changing class basis of the administration and its growingly professional character are emerging as factors favourable to implementation of land reforms. Such hypotheses offer scope for comparative studies of the role of administration in land reforms for different regions of the country.

Similarly, the role of organisations of small peasants, tenants and labourers in raising the question of land reforms, in articulating the demand for land reforms at the political level and in directly asserting peasant rights at the village level requires comprehensive exploration in different regions. There are States like Kerala where a stronger Left movement and a greater degree of consciousness and organisation of the peasants has not only ensured a better legislation relatively freer from gaps and loopholes but also more effective implementation of this legislation. At the other extreme are States like Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan where the greater influence of the landlords at the political level and lack of political consciousness and organisation of peasants has been responsible for landlord-oriented legislation as well as its implementation in favour of landlords. In between these two extremes are States like U.P. where certain factors like the existence of an urban middle class relatively emancipated from connections with land and of a rich and middle peasantry have helped to create a situation more favourable to certain types of land reforms than, say, in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar. Even the Congress and the State administration in States like U.P. have been far less landlord-dominated than in Bihar.

This means that the analysis of the implementation process requires that India is not treated as a monolithic whole, that the country be divided into a few types or regions from the point of view of the character of political parties and the administrative system, the extent of growth of peasant consciousness and organisation, the extent of growth of a professional middle class dissociated from landownership etc.

Needless to add, such sophisticated analyses of land reform have yet to be undertaken with more appropriate methods and more authentic data.

Even abstract factors like 'weakness of political will' emphasised by the *Task Force Report* of the Planning Commission require a more concrete treatment with reference to different regions in terms of elements spelled out earlier. Studies undertaken with this new focus, with an emphasis on evolving typology of regions from the point of view of success or failure in land reforms and with a concrete analysis of the reasons of specific successes and failures will be far more useful also for providing a new understanding and drawing a new strategy of action.

In the above background the study of the political structure as a whole appears to be crucial—the study not only of the structure of the government at different levels but the structure of Parliament, of the State legislatures, of the block and village panchayats, of the political parties at the Centre, the State, district and village levels and of organisations and associations of the interest groups connected with land. Studies on each of these are crucial for evaluating the possibilities and constraints of land reforms. It is the processes of change in the political structure and the identification of factors promoting and retarding change which appear as the most important problem areas for scientific enquiry. Very few, for instance, have so far concretely analysed the changes in the social character and composition of Parliament or of the State legislatures in different regions or of the Central and State governments with a view to assessing the changes in the degree of influence exercised by landed interests on decision-making and the implementation of decisions.

The labelling of a political regime as a 'bourgeois-landlord' regime as done by the critics of the regime or as a 'democratic regime' as done by the supporters of the regime represents an intellectual escape from analysis of real processes and from identifying how the structure has changed over time. Speaking from a comparative standpoint the regime in Pakistan is a 'bourgeois-landlord regime' and the regime in India is also a 'bourgeois-landlord regime'. Such broad generalisations do not carry one very far unless the specific characteristics of each regime and of the same regime even within the same country are concretely explored and identified.

To say that the character of the political structure and its constituent elements (e.g. Parliament, legislature, administration, political parties etc.) has remained unaltered since independence is to substitute assertions for scientific analysis. An empirical examination of the social composition of Parliament or the legislature or the political parties is bound to reveal the declining influence of the old type landlords and the increasing influence of the new type of landlords and of the new peasant landowners. Among the formidable impediments to the implementation of land reforms the *Task Force Report* has highlighted the fact that 'as in the case of the men who wield political power, those in the higher echelons of the administration also are substantial landowners themselves or they have close links with the landowners'. Further, 'the village functionaries like Patwaris,

Karmcharis, Karnams, Sambogs, Talatis etc. are invariably petty landowners'. That the political structure is still under the influence of landowners is undeniable. But there are landowners and landowners. The big zamindar of the old days or the occupancy tenant who has now become a proprietor himself, both are landowners. Similarly, the old zamindars now turned into big farmers employing agricultural labourers and the rich and middle peasants cultivating mainly with their family labour are also landowners. The task of analysis is to explore which type of landowners have lost their influence and which type of landowners have gained influence. In many parts of the country the possibilities of reducing the influence of the old type of landowners have been fully exploited. But the problem of tackling the new type of landowner through land reforms faces great difficulties because of his deep roots in village economy and his influence over village society

Further, just as there are landowners and landowners, the landless also are of various types. Protecting the tenant belonging to peasant castes is not the same thing as protecting a share-cropper or an agricultural labourer from the backward tribal groups or from the untouchables. In the case of the latter their social and cultural backwardness is a serious handicap which does not allow them to avail of their rights even when they are provided for in the legislation. In the case of such backward castes and communities mere legislative provisions are not enough; they have to be supported by vigorous efforts to raise their level of consciousness and organisation through sustained work by non-government agencies. The *Task Force Report* has stated that 'a certain degree of politicisation of the poor peasantry on militant lines is a pre-requisite for any successful legislative-administrative action for conferring rights and privileges' upon them. This is a very sound observation but it has not been substantiated by an identification of factors which have helped this process of politicisation in certain areas of the country. Case study of areas of enlightened, organised and assertive peasantry would throw abundant light on the whole problem of the role of peasants themselves in land reforms implementation.

The purpose of our observations here is to emphasise that general statements about obstacles to land reform implementation are not enough. What is needed is the identification of specific groups in the agrarian structure which have to be benefited through land reform and of the concrete nature of their handicaps and deficiencies. Moreover, one needs a more detailed examination of the social and political conditions and instruments of implementation of land reforms and what changes have been occurring over time in each one of them in different parts of the country.

The study of rural-urban interaction at the ideological, political, economic and social levels also needs very thorough examination as part of land reforms analysis. G. Parthasarathy has observed that the respect for property rights is so deep in our society that it can be swept off only by a revolu-

tionary upheaval. This idea itself needs empirical verification. Can it be said, for instance, that the impact of urban political ideologies, movements and parties on the rural society has resulted in a steady erosion of the respect for the concept of property in land? Or, as Gadgil suggested, the movements like Bhoodan and Gramdan may result in over-valuation of land as an asset rather than in a psychological break from over-attachment to land? Further, in many areas those who constitute the urban working class have retained their links with villages. These migrants are exposed to the influence of trade unions and political parties and learn the value of struggle on economic and political issues through the use of such weapons as strike, Bundh, non-payment of taxes etc. Do these migrants act as carriers of radical ideologies and forms of struggle to the poor in the countryside? Or do they present the paradox of radicalism in the urban and conservatism in the rural setting? Such questions offer very fruitful areas for empirical examination.

There is no doubt that during the past twenty-five years land reforms in India have *not* assumed the form of a gigantic revolutionary upheaval as in China or that of a dramatic change brought about from above as in Japan. But from this to jump to the conclusion that the land reforms programme has been a hoax or a total fiasco is to substitute assertion for detailed empirical examination. India has also witnessed important changes in the agrarian structure which have gone unnoticed because of the absence of a down-to-earth approach in assessing these changes. Take, for instance, the practice of forced labour, of *Begar* and illegal exactions, of social tyranny and non-economic compulsions in employment specially in Zamindari and Jagirdari areas. Take also the practice of agrestic serfdom and debt slavery which prevailed so widely in the countryside before land reforms. To the best of my knowledge no single scholar has undertaken a study in depth of the changes that have come about in these practices and in terms of change from unfree to free labour. Serious analysts of the political situation must ask themselves why the peasantry (specially its most down-trodden section viz. the untouchables) have by and large stood by the Indian National Congress for almost three decades since independence. Apart from many mechanisms adopted by the ruling elite to perpetuate its rule, certain agrarian changes in favour of the peasants explain, even if partly, the stability of the peasant support for the Congress.

The great merit of the *Task Force Report* is that it has posed for the first time in the recent period the question of creating the favourable political conditions for effective implementation of land reforms. The concept of 'political will' is however too vague to be of practical use in planning for effective implementation of land reforms. Political will, or the lack of it, is reflected in the lower or higher levels of consciousness and organisation, and in the resistance or responsiveness to changes in the property structure shown by political and legal institutions, political parties and the legislative

bodies, executive organs of the government and the judiciary, and finally, by the agencies exercising coercion and authority (like the police etc.). This question of political will shows a certain complexity because of the vast size of the country, its highly centralised but federal system of authority.

What is necessary is to locate *critical* and *strategic* points in the political system which need to be restructured and activated for effective implementation of land reforms. To dismiss the system as full of constraints at a general level does not require much scientific work. But a high level of scientific expertise is necessary to explore the constraints in a concrete manner by summarising and evaluating the experience of a particular region. Experience specially of those regions should be explored where attempts were made to utilise the possibilities of the political system for effecting changes in the agrarian structure. It must be recognised that constraints cannot be discovered in isolation from exploring and utilising the possibilities; it is only when that the limits of the system are reached. This type of approach has not been pursued in India by those interested in land reforms.

It is important to note that politico-economic analysis in India has been more oriented towards emphasising the constraints of the system than its possibilities. If the task of land reforms in India remains unfinished, it is wrong to jump at once to the conclusion that it is due to the constraints of the system. The lack of perception of possibilities and the consequent inability to utilise them may itself explain part of the failure of land reforms. This is not to deny that the political system has serious constraints which require to be overcome. But at what points does the system need restructuring cannot be settled on an *a priori* basis. Instead of being merely critical in the abstract, the politico-economic analysis has to be made operational in the sense of being an aid to effective action. Scientific studies which help to draw generalisation from success and failure stories in different parts of the country have an important role to play in this task of identifying possibilities and constraints within the political system.

Few scholars have, for instance, taken up the study of the important question of land records and of the deficiencies of lower level officials entrusted with the task of maintaining land records. The role of the political parties, administration, the police, and the courts in land and rent disputes between landlords and tenants has in very few cases been studied in depth. What role has the Central government played in the past in terms of persuading and pressurising the State governments for land reforms? What changes are required in the powers of the Central or State governments for more effective action? Is violation of land reforms laws anywhere an offence punishable by law in any State? Are there any legal constraints on peasant agitation for land reforms? Studies on these and other allied subjects are needed on the basis of authentic data and they can help in suggesting concrete measures



for restructuring the political and the administrative system.

If there is one single lesson of land reform implementation in the past, it is that the consciousness and organisation of the peasantry and the support of strategic sections of society (e.g. the middle class, the intelligentsia, the working class) to the peasants is crucial for the success of land reforms. In areas where such conditions existed, the legislation itself was better and more effectively implemented. Where these conditions were missing, legislation was full of loopholes and it was also evaded. Scientific studies can explore the present state of consciousness and organisation among the peasants and assess the degree of sympathy for land reforms among strategic sections of society including the working class. Scientific studies can also contribute towards awakening the sympathy for land reforms among non-peasant classes and to inspiring persons with idealism and social awareness to take up the cause of peasant consciousness and organisation.

If the socio-political circumstances are not the same in the country as a whole from the point of view of the political feasibility of land reforms, then it may be necessary to evolve a political *typology* which brings out the diversity of the socio-political circumstances and the necessity of evolving specific strategies of action to suit each type of circumstances. A tentative typology has been suggested below:

- (1) Areas where peasants are still so steeped in apathy and ignorance that a lot of ground work would require to be done to make them conscious of their rights and aware of the need of organisation and mobilisation for the defence of their rights.
- (2) Areas where the consciousness of the peasantry is already much ahead of the state of peasant organisation and the task therefore is to make up the *organisational lag*.
- (3) Areas where the peasants are conscious and also more organised. But their organisational resources are not adequate to meet the superior organisational resources of the landlords and the rural rich who have not refrained in the past from the use of armed violence for terrorising the peasants. The latter have succeeded even in having the armed police on their side against the peasants. This poses a complex situation where it may be necessary to raise the level and quality of peasant organisation for self-defence. It may even be necessary to take firm steps for re-educating and re-organising the police force so that it is not a party to landlord violence. It may also be necessary to deprive the landlords of their gun licences. Moreover, determined political support in favour of the peasant by urban working classes, students and the youth and other sections may also be necessary.

It should be remembered that to arouse the expectations of the peasants without a sustained effort to create political conditions for the fulfilment of these expectations is to play with fire. In many countries a traditionalist

backlash has resulted from the acute frustration of peasant aspirations. The very announcement of land reform leads to prompt retaliatory and anticipatory action by the landlords resulting in disturbance of old relations between landlords and peasants. To take the peasants only half-way on the road of land reforms is to expose them to great insecurity which has dangerous political consequences.

The study of the experience of Telengana, West Bengal, Srikakulam and other areas of peasant action from this point of view would be extremely valuable.

Another question which deserves serious study both from the scientific and from the operational point of view is the question of agrarian violence. A reorganisation of the land system involves the most drastic change of the property structure and an attack on established interests. It is a more traumatic disturbance when the target of attack is not the class of functionless landlords but the class of peasant-landowners with deep-seated attachment to land. The conflicts between peasant castes and Harijan labourers is prompted by tensions between them as the landed and the land-hungry classes. Seldom has the process of total or partial dispossession of landed classes been a totally peaceful one; it has by and large been associated with some element of violence. Quite often the excesses of the landlords have also provoked peasant violence. It has also been a lesson of agrarian history that the higher the state of peasant consciousness and organisation, the lesser the degree of violence to which the peasants are exposed. The study of landlords-peasant conflict from the standpoint of agrarian violence is useful from both scientific and operational points of view.

This is an extremely important subject because *the question of combining land reforms legislation with peasant organisation and mobilisation of non-peasant support has emerged* as the most significant issue for the next phase of land reforms. Social scientists have an important role to play in this task by offering insights from Indian and non-Indian experience in the field of land reforms.

In the recent period some social scientists offered new insights on the question of peasant movement and of the nature of the peasantry as a political force on the basis of the experience of other countries. These can provide a starting point for studies on the peasant movements in India. Hobsbawm, for instance, has revealed the weaknesses of the peasantry as a force for national politics. In his view 'the potential power of a peasantry is enormous but its actual power is limited' ('Peasants and Politics', *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, Vol. I, Number 1, October 1973). He recalls Marx's famous observation that the peasants are 'incapable of enforcing their class interest in their own name'; that 'they cannot represent themselves and that they must be represented'. In other words, the peasant question is *potentially* a question of great revolutionary significance. And whether this revolutionary potentiality would actually be tapped for or against the interests

of the peasants depends not so much on the peasants but on the non-peasant classes e.g. the industrial capitalist class, the middle class and the working classes. In fact, radical changes in the structure of landed property in the interests of peasants depend upon the creation of a *bloc of peasant and non-peasant classes* upholding a programme of national development and giving a high priority to land reforms in this national programme. The major question is whether conditions favourable for the creation of such a power bloc of peasant and non-peasant classes exist in India as is willing to give high priority to land reforms. The role of international power balance in favouring or retarding the creation of such a power bloc is a related question for scientific enquiry. Further, prospects for the creation of such a power-bloc may vary from one region to another. For instance, in some areas like the Punjab and Haryana where rich peasants have emerged as a new dynamic force in the economy and a new locus of power in the polity, the creation of a bloc of classes in favour of land reforms may confront serious difficulties. But in areas still dominated by non-peasant landlordism the prospects for creation of such a power bloc may be brighter. The question of creating political conditions for land reforms as posed by the *Task Force Report* can, therefore, be reformulated as the question of creating a *power bloc of peasant and non-peasant classes* for land reforms.

This leads us to the question of programmes of land reforms in the coming period. The land reforms programme which was initiated during the early years of independence may now be out of date in many respects and would require reformulation in the light of changing conditions in different parts of the country. Scientific studies of the agrarian structure in different regions are required to assess what changes have occurred in this structure since independence and what changes are required now in the light of present compulsions and requirements. It should be noted that during the early years of independence the programme of land reforms was almost imposed from above. In the current period it would be more appropriate if it is formulated after sufficient exploration from below. For this purpose an identification of *regional agrarian systems* is necessary. A tentative typology has been presented in the remaining part of this chapter.

This typology is meant to provide a starting point of investigations into the agrarian structure in the new phase.

### (1) *Areas where absentee landlordism still persists*

There perhaps still are some areas in the country where absentee landlordism still continues. These areas need to be demarcated and the nature of the problem of absenteeism explored. Absentee landlordism should be distinguished from non-cultivating landlordism. The discrepancy between ownership and operation of land is common to both but the absentee owner is in addition also a non-resident of the village where the land is located.

The magnitude of such absentee landlordism needs to be assessed. Are there certain regions where such absentee landlordism is concentrated or is it present in varying degrees in many regions? Who are the tenants of these absentee landlords and what has prevented these tenants from acquiring security of tenure and ownership rights? Information needs to be collected on all these points.

(2) *Areas of non-cultivating landlordism, open or disguised*

In many areas the discrepancy between ownership and operation of land as reflected in resort to tenancy continues even when the owner or his family is a resident of the village. The magnitude and forms of such tenancy, its terms and conditions including rent payment, cost-sharing, the continuance of forced labour or illegal exactions if any etc. need to be assessed. What is the caste of the landlord and of the tenants? What is the scope of legislation for tackling this problem of tenancy? In some areas the tenant is a subsistence cultivator perpetually dependent on the landlord who is also a money-lender and a trader. In more commercialised regions the tenant is a commercial farmer; and here in place of the usual picture of a rich landlord and poor tenant we have sometimes the opposite picture of a rich tenant and a poor landlord. The nature and scope of the tenancy legislation therefore has to be different for these two different types of regions. Moreover, there may be cases as in Kerala or other parts of the country where both the landlords and the tenants are poor and land reform has to perform a delicate function of balancing the interests of one weak party against that of a weaker party. The solution to these problems of tenancy can be evolved only with greater access to the details of the specific types of tenancy in different regions. The share-cropping tenancy arrangements of the eastern zone requires a special study from this point of view.

It should be noted that information regarding the magnitude of tenancy is not very illuminating if details about its character are not known. Both West Bengal and the Punjab are 'high tenancy areas' according to data of the National Sample Survey. But a tenant in the Punjab is not the same as a tenant in West Bengal. the former being less inhibited in growth initiative than the latter. Further, the scope for legislation can be assessed only if there is precise knowledge of these details.

(3) *Areas of change-over from non-cultivating landlordism to commercially oriented landlordism or to large-scale farming by landlords*

To this category belong many States in the country and many parts within a State. Here we distinguish between two types of landlord-tenant arrangements. Under the first the landlord is a mere appropriator of rental income and under the latter the landlord takes interest in land by provid-

ing resources for investment even though he does not supervise or himself undertake major agricultural operations. The first type of landlord-tenant relationship has been included under 'disguised landlordism'. The second type of commercial landlordism needs separate categorisation. This is a new type which has emerged in many areas specially under the impact of technological change and the growing profitability of agriculture. Special studies are needed on the relationship between landlords and tenants under this new arrangement, on its impact on productivity and on the distribution of gains from production between landlords and tenants. To what extent there is a transition to commercial landlordism in areas earlier dominated by unproductive landlordism also needs exploration. It is only after ascertaining these facts that the scope of tenancy reforms in relation to these new arrangements can be explored.

In areas earlier dominated by unproductive landlordism another type of arrangement is also in vogue. Under this the landlord evicts the tenants, re-employs them as agricultural labourers, directly manages his farm and himself supervises agricultural operations. This type of large-scale farming has been very common in many areas by now, though many studies of these types of landlord farming are not yet available. Whether commercial landlordism or landlord farming has new elements of genuine entrepreneurship which distinguish them from old style landlordism or they represent only old wine in new bottles can be ascertained only by a thorough investigation at the level of these farms. Without such knowledge the social and economic significance of these agrarian changes and the scope of land reforms for these patterns of land ownership cannot be properly assessed and indicated.

It should be noted that most studies on land reform evaluation had revealed that an increase in owner-operated area which has occurred as a result of land legislation is in many cases not at all an indication of the upgrading of the tenant into an owner-cultivator. Owner-cultivation has increased more by eviction of the tenants and resumption of land by the landlord for self-cultivation. How far this claim of the landlord of turning into an owner-cultivator was genuine and how far it was a device to retain his hold over his land needs detailed examination.

(4) *Areas of transfer of land from landlords to a section of the peasantry and the emergence of a kulak economy*

The types mentioned earlier denoted continuance of land in the hands of the same type of landlord or that of a landlord whose character had changed. Here we emphasise the transfer of land from landlords to a section of the peasants themselves. The social, economic and political role of these new peasant-landowners, their role as producers and as promoters of technological change, their use of the economic surplus from agriculture, their relation to other sections of the peasants and landless labourers—all need

comprehensive empirical exploration.

In many areas technological change has brought great prosperity to this class of new peasant-landowners. The impact of this prosperity on this class of peasant-landowners also needs investigation. History is full of examples of feudal retrogression among cultivating landowners once they reach a certain level of affluence. Does it lead to tendencies of withdrawal of family labour from farms, to greater use of hired labour and ultimately to recrudescence of landlord-tenant relations? To what extent these new peasant landowners also constitute a class of agriculturist money-lenders and traders? Do they also lease out land to tenants and share-croppers? What kind of treatment do they met out to agricultural labourers who are mostly untouchables? To what extent do they oppose or support provision of homestead land and cultivation plots to these Harijan labourers? To what extent do they oppose use of wells and extension of literacy and educational facilities to these underprivileged castes and communities? Through what devices and mechanisms do they oppose the legislation for implementation of ceilings on land holdings? What is the degree of control they exercise over rural administrative institutions and political processes?

The study of these questions is extremely important for analysing further scope of land reforms in relation to these new landowners who put up the greatest resistance to the implementation of land reforms in favour of the rural poor. The scope of tenancy reforms and of taking over surplus land from these peasants for distribution among the poor needs detailed assessment. It seems that in areas dominated by such peasant landowners a policy of lifting up the rural poor has perhaps to rely much more on tapping the economic surplus from these prosperous peasants than on tapping their land surplus.

#### (5) *Areas of predominance of self-employed small and middle peasants*

There exist areas in the country where the rural economy consists by and large of small and middle peasants and where either 'unproductive landlordism' or 'commercial landlordism' or 'capitalist landlordism' is by and large non-existent. In such areas conventional land reforms do not offer much scope either for economic development or for social justice.

#### (6) *Areas of landlessness as distinguished from areas of wage labour*

A clear distinction needs to be made between growth of mere landlessness and growth of wage labour. In many areas landlessness has increased either as a result of evictions or of population growth and there is no scope for the absorption of the landless population into wage labour. The constraints of agricultural employment within the village either in the form of self-employment or of wage employment promote an exodus of the rural poor to the towns and cities of India. In recent years there is also some

growth in migration to more prosperous rural areas which offer scope for employment in agriculture or other allied activities.

It needs to be explored how far restructuring of the agrarian system offers scope for absorption of the landless population and how far the problem needs to be tackled through other means and measures.

It should be emphasised here that in the earlier period the analysis of the agrarian problem has generally been done either at the all-India or State levels. It is now time that we make a shift to analysing the problem of land reforms at the level of regions within a State and more specifically at the level of groups of districts or even sometimes at the level of a single district. And instead of analysing the problem of land reforms in isolation from other programmes, land reform programmes have to be concretised as part of an integrated and comprehensive strategy for regional development. The highest priority needs to be given to poverty-stricken and backward regions for such area planning and development.

Finally, another important point needs to be underlined here. The task of land reforms research is to distinguish those regions where redistribution of land is the starting point of any serious anti-poverty programmes from those where the possibilities of land redistribution have either been exhausted or have at best limited potential. In these latter regions the scope for eradicating poverty through tapping the land surplus of rich peasants or landlords is perhaps much less than the scope for tapping their economic surplus and investing it on programmes of mass employment.

In respect of regions of the first type a clear distinction has to be made between the scope for helping the rural poor through the effective enforcement of tenancy reform measures on the one hand and through effective implementation of the land ceiling legislation on the other. In many areas the decline of tenancy resulting from eviction of tenants or the emergence of business tenancy practised by prosperous tenants has substantially reduced the scope of relief to rural poor through tenancy reforms. The question of land ceilings has also to be considered in a dynamic context. The level of ceiling desirable at a low level of technological development would be quite different from that desirable at a higher level of technological development. The level of ceiling would also vary whether the technology chosen is of a land-augmenting or of a labour-displacing type.

We now sum up this whole question of reformulating the land reforms programme. In the past the question of land reforms was sometimes treated in isolation from the question of industrialisation. One school of thought (represented, for instance, by economists of left-wing persuasion) was inclined to consider the reorganisation of the agrarian structure as indispensable for industrialisation. The other school of thought (voiced, for instance, by Dantwala) was inclined to emphasise that all efforts to evolve a rational agrarian structure were bound to fail in the absence of industrialisation. In the present situation following the experience of

national development for more than two and a half decades there is now greater appreciation of the inter-dependence of rationalisation of the agrarian structure and general economic development. It is important to note that regions which are at a relatively higher level of economic development have a less retrograde agrarian structure. And in regions suffering from overall economic backwardness the agrarian structure is also far more retrogressive than elsewhere. It is evident that land reforms can only succeed as part of a wider programme of structural change and economic development. While this interdependence of land reforms and general economic development is appreciated more than before, enough thought has not been given to the type of economic development which would be conducive to making the agrarian structure more just and rational. In this respect enough work has not been done in terms of drawing lessons from the colonial period. The 'enclave type' of economic development characteristic of colonialism (i.e. the creation of parasitical urban enclaves like Calcutta or Bombay) did not have any beneficial effect on the surrounding countryside. On the contrary the parasitical urban classes joined together with the parasitical rural classes for appropriation of the surplus from agricultural producers and its dissipation in unproductive uses. A sharp contrast to this 'enclave type' of development is presented by patterns of complementary urban and rural economic growth as in the Punjab, Haryana, Maharashtra, Tamilnadu etc. The planning for a new pattern of urban industrial development is an essential part of a policy of rural transformation. Further, innovation of patterns of urban-industrial development are also linked with innovation of new forms of property in means of production in the industrial sector. The important point to note is that both patterns of industrialisation and forms of property suited for countries with low man-land ratio may not be suited for countries characterised by high man-land ratio. Land reforms in the countryside and socially oriented property structure in the urban sphere represent two aspects of a single process of extension of the principle of equality, justice and mass participation to the economic sphere.

Finally, the question of land reform is also related to two divergent perspectives of agrarian re-organisation. These perspectives which have emerged from recent thinking and reflection on the subject of land reforms need to be studied in regional depth to be of operational significance. These perspectives of agrarian reorganisation can be identified as follows:

- (a) Perspective of peasant agriculture within a cooperative framework.
- (b) Perspective of regulated capitalist agriculture.

The thinking of a large number of scholars has in the recent past converged on the acceptance of *family labour-based peasant agriculture* as the main institutional framework of agricultural transformation in India. This presupposes on the one hand a considerable redistribution of land from non-producers to producers and from large producers to medium and small

producers. There are, however, two variants of this perspective. Some scholars envisage development of a network of service cooperatives for transformation of traditional agriculture into modern agriculture in the holdings of these small and medium producers. There are scholars like G. Parthasarathy, on the other hand, who envisage the creation of a 'socialist bloc' in the countryside. In their view the surplus land released for redistribution should be used not for multiplying small owners but as a land base for collective agriculture by the landless and the poor peasants.

While the first perspective involves comprehensive land reforms the second perspective involves land reforms on a limited scale—'protective land reforms' as Dantwala calls it—for giving relief to share-croppers, tenants-at-will and marginal farmers, who may otherwise be ousted from land by large producers. A different view is expressed by Dandekar who sees a way out for the rural poor not in land reforms but in the rural works programmes.

These perspectives need to be explored at the empirical level on the basis of regional studies. In fact, each one of these perspectives seems to have emerged on the basis of the familiarity which scholars generally have with the specific region to which they belong and where they have conducted their investigations. The first type of perspective seems to have greater relevance for areas of great population pressure and backward agriculture like the Eastern region while the second perspective has greater relevance for areas like the Punjab, Haryana, Maharashtra and Gujarat etc. Questions of programmes and perspectives can be settled, therefore, not through *a priori* logic alone but also through patient examination of facts at the regional levels. In particular, the consequences of capitalist growth in agriculture and the prospects of regulating it in favour of rural masses deserve empirical exploration on the basis of data and information relating to regions where such growth has occurred in the recent period.

The contradictions between an emerging capitalist sector and the peasant sector and the impact of the former on the latter need to be studied in depth. It should be remembered that the Punjab is in many respects *atypical* and not representative of the Indian rural economy. If capitalistic growth in agriculture has not led to adverse consequences on the peasant sector in the Punjab, care should be taken in drawing conclusions from this about the nature of capitalist agriculture and about its repercussions on the rural economy for the country as a whole. Is this indicative of the fact that in agriculture the growth of the capitalist sector and that of the peasant sector are complementary and not antagonistic to each other? Does it mean that capitalism in agriculture does not result in the ousting of the small producer by the large producer? Or does it mean that the fundamental tendencies of capitalism represented by the ousting of the small producer by the large producer and the proletarianisation of the small producer are counteracted by certain powerful factors which are exceptional to the Punjab and which may not be operative in other areas. Indeed, each region has to be allowed a certain

autonomy in evolving its own pattern of agrarian relations. At the same time the limits of regional autonomy have also to be explored. Can a capitalist pattern of agricultural growth be allowed to emerge and consolidate itself in one part of the country while a cooperative rural economy is being advocated for another part of the country?

Questions of institutional policy for the coming years in relation to land thus call for a blending of empirical depth on the one hand and creative theorising on the other.

## CHAPTER VIII

### LESS EXPLORED AREAS IN AGRARIAN STUDIES : CONCLUSION

WE SHALL NOW attempt to indicate the problem areas which need to be explored in the coming years by social scientists—by economists, social anthropologists and sociologists, political scientists, geographers, economic and social historians. It needs to be emphasised that the industrialisation of Asian countries like India is introducing fundamental changes in the traditional agrarian social structure. But the continuing predominance and resilience of the *peasant* seems to emerge as a distinguishing feature of the Asian pattern of industrialisation. This is not to deny that the *peasant mode of production* may undergo qualitative changes under the impact of the powerful economic, social, political and technological factors connected with the industrialisation and modernisation processes. In this background the study of the changing patterns of the agrarian social structure or of the peasant mode of production would continue to be one of the major preoccupations of social science in the coming years.

Social science research can contribute meaningful generalisations on this larger question only when adequate work has been done in regional depth on relatively *smaller problems* by research workers from different disciplines. Some of these smaller problems can be identified as follows.

#### I. The changing structure of tenancy in each region:

(a) The changes in the magnitude of tenancy (including share-cropping).

(b) Changes in the character and types of tenancy:

- (i) From subsistence to commercial tenancy and from secure to insecure, long-period to short-period tenancy.
- (ii) Forms of tenancy—share of crop, fixed kind rent or cash.
- (iii) Tenancy and land-size: Who leases in and who leases out? Is the land leased out by the big to the middle or the small cultivator; or by the small to the middle or big groups?
- (iv) Tenant-landlord relationship in development programmes—cost-sharing arrangements, if any, and their implications for agricultural improvements.
- (v) Caste and tenancy.
- (vi) Tenancy and access to credit and inputs.
- (vii) Efficiency of tenant cultivation.
- (viii) The inter-penetration of tenancy and wage-labour.
- (ix) Development of tenant associations and organisations.
- (x) Landlord-tenant conflicts and disturbances, spontaneous

or led by political parties.

- II. Land Hunger:
- (i) Factors accentuating land hunger.
  - (ii) Economic forms in which it is expressed.
  - (iii) Social and political effects of land hunger.
- III. Nature and Magnitude of Land Transfers.
- (i) Land transfers from big to middle or small cultivators; or from small to middle or big cultivators; to persons inside the village or outside rural or urban interests.
  - (ii) Mechanism of transfer—purchase, sale, debt etc.
  - (iii) Financing of land transfers.
- IV. (i) Marginal farmers and small producers—How widespread is the 'squeezing out' of the small producer from cultivation? Its manifestations:
- Leasing out of land to middle or big cultivators.
  - Pauperisation or proletarianisation.
  - Exodus to towns.
  - Extent of support provided by the administrative and organisational structure to the small producer.
  - Forms of politicisation of small producers.
- (ii) Changes in the structure, socio-economic composition and levels of living of the landless class.
- The extent of unionisation and politicisation of agricultural labour.
- V. Inter-relation of the land and the credit systems.
- (i) The role of the professional or the agriculturist money-lenders;
  - (ii) the role of cooperative credit;
  - (iii) the role of nationalised banks in agricultural credit.
- VI. Inter-relation of the land and marketing systems.
- VII. The large producer:
- (i) Who constitute the large producers, the traditionally big landlords or the intermediate class of superior tenants and medium landowners? What is the role of tenancy or land reforms in the crystallisation of the intermediate class?
  - (ii) the generation gap and entrepreneurship: Where one began as ordinary peasant but later grew into a prosperous farmer, what is the attitude of the sons of this prosperous farmer towards farming?
  - (iii) Forms of utilisation of economic surplus,
    - (a) within the farm,
    - (b) non-farm economic activities,
    - (c) in usury, trade, or land acquisition,
    - (d) in adjoining urban areas in housing, cinema houses, buses etc. or in conspicuous consumption.

- (iv) The extent of dominance of the larger producer in the sphere of credit, trade, input distribution, seed farms, price fixation agencies.
  - (v) Forms of political dominance of the large producer—political parties, panchayats, districts and State administration, lobbies in State legislature and Parliament.
- VIII. What factors determine the distribution of entrepreneurship at the village and regional levels—caste, land ownership, education, participation in the non-farm, urban sector, influence at the political and administrative levels?
- IX. To what extent the State institutions for credit, marketing input distribution etc. counteract the rigidities and inequities of the agrarian class structure and to what extent they operate within the constraints of the class structure?
- X. The relationship between agrarian class structure and the regional and all-India power structure :
- (i) Who are the dominant classes in the power structure—the traditional upper class or the new intermediate class? Are the two classes identical?
  - (ii) What is the inter-relation of the agrarian class structure with the structure and functioning of political parties? To what extent forces generated at the all-India level counteract effectively the pressures exerted by the large producer at the regional levels?
  - (iii) What is the sensitiveness of the various parts of the political system to the interests of other classes consisting of the small peasants, tenants and agricultural labourers?
  - (vi) To what extent the lower classes continue to function as 'vote banks' for the large producers? To what extent they are tending to break away from them?
- XI. The impact of commercialism and technological progress on the social structure:
- (i) Impact on social stratification, occupational mobility; on customary relations between classes and communities; on traditional values and norms regarding thrift, work, forms of investment (jewellery, land, cattle, implements, modern gadgets etc.); on attitudes towards land either as a source of prestige or as an economic resource.
  - (ii) The impact of the emergence of the new rich (*nouveaux riche*) on the social structure—the inter-relation between the new rich and the traditional aristocracy at the economic, social and political levels.
  - (iii) To what extent accentuated casteism and communalism are a reflection at the social level of differential access to economic

opportunity in the case of different castes and communities?

- (iv) To what extent leadership structure in rural India continues to be land-based and to what extent other economic and non-economic bases of leadership formation have emerged, counter-acting the traditional association of leadership with land-ownership?
- (v) What is the character and pattern of emerging values, beliefs and norms and of symbols of social prestige in different agrarian regions? What is the impact of the new values of competition, rationality and acquisitiveness on the traditional religious outlook, and on the traditional institutions of family, caste and the village community?
- (vi) What is the impact of exposure to new forces on the consumption psychology and actual consumption behaviour of different sections of rural society? To what extent the lower sections of society consider acquisition of land or enlargement of land-ownership as the necessary means of acquiring command over goods and services? To what extent attention is shifting from self-employed peasant status to income enhancement through other means like employment outside agriculture etc.?

To what extent sensitiveness to inequality or injustice assumes the form of a sense of deprivation from a share in landed property?

To what extent having a piece of land is a necessary condition to satisfy the urge for equity?

- (vii) To what extent 'land reforms' constitute a 'felt need' from below and to what extent it is an issue raised from above by sections of the political elite without reference to the demand from below.

XII. Impact of population growth on land relations: The regional contrast.

XIII. (i) A typology of tribal economies and the structure of land relations—under each type.

(ii) Impact of commercialisation and technological change on traditional land relations in tribal societies.

(iii) Tribal protest movements against land alienation.

XIV. Regional economy and agrarian systems.

(i) the role of the cropping pattern.

(ii) nature of monsoon and irrigation system.

(iii) nature of work in different types of agriculture.

(iv) nature of technology.

XV. The implementation of land reforms.

(i) The inter-relation of the political and administrative structure in the implementation process.

- (ii) The weakness of 'political will' and its underlying causes.
  - (iii) The legal structure as an aid or impediment for effective implementation.
  - (iv) The role of Central government in land reforms.
  - (v) The role of the political parties in land reforms.
  - (vi) The role of State government and its various agencies.
- XVI. The process of technological change and distribution of gains among various sections.
- XVII. Irrigation schemes and their relation to large and small farmers.
- XVIII. Land distribution among rural poor in different States.
- XIX. The landed property of religious institutions: non-parasitic and parasitic elements in this type of landownership.
- XX. The analysis of land disputes among landlords and tenants.  
—Settled through courts.  
—Settled without the aid of courts.
- XXI. The study of lower level officials and their role in land reforms.
- XXII. The study of land records—and their class bias—case studies in selected regions.
- XXIII. 'Land grabbing' of agricultural land by urban interest groups: Politicians, professional bureaucrats and higher army personnel.
- XVIV. The scope of reclamation of uncultivated land and its distribution among the rural poor.
- XXV. The study of agrarian conflicts and movements:
  - (i) The Telengana struggle and its impact on agrarian structure in the region.
  - (ii) The Tebhaga movement in West Bengal.
  - (iii) The land seizure movement under the United Front regime in West Bengal.
  - (iv) The 'land grab' movement of 1971.
  - (v) The Naxalbari struggle and its consequences for agrarian structure and its reforms based on case study of villages.
  - (vi) The *Srikakulam* movement and its impact on agrarian structure.

#### CONCLUSION

To be sure, it is possible to enlarge further the list of problems which need the attention of the social scientists from different disciplines for an understanding of the land problem in all its complexity.

The problem has to be understood in terms of its regional varieties and peculiarities and also in terms of its many-sided character. We have tried to indicate in this survey that an understanding even of the techno-economic dimension of the land problem is not possible without an understanding of its interrelation and interaction with social, political and ideological factors. Further, in the present context, understanding has to be an instrument of

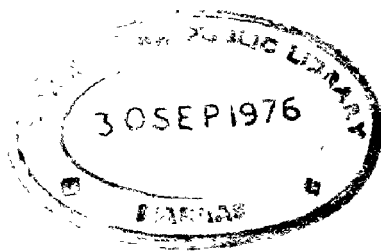
changing the given situation through a programme of *social action*. A programme of action cannot be evolved merely with knowledge, however sophisticated, of parts of the structure only. It requires some perception, however imperfect, of the relation of the *parts* to the *whole*. Indeed, it requires some perception of the working of the whole system in a dynamic context.

From this wider standpoint, understanding of land reform or of technological change or agricultural transformation requires some understanding of the structure of society as a whole in the process of change. The construction of such a macro-view is only partly the function of 'imagination' or 'wisdom' of a sage-scientist or a group of sage-scientists. More importantly, behind the 'wisdom' or 'imagination' of one sage, there is the wealth of micro-insights provided by a large number of researchers carrying on painstaking enquiries and investigations in smaller areas over a number of years. A macro-view without authentic micro insights cannot provide any meaningful understanding of the social situation as a whole. At the same time, there cannot be a meaningful search for micro insights without an awareness of the requirements of a macro-view. The large number of smaller questions have thus to be derived from the larger question posed before the social scientists by the social and political environment. In the present phase of the Indian history, scientific enquiry has to be focussed on the major question of the *processes and patterns of change in the peasant sector of the Indian rural economy and society in the context of growth and development*.

The enquiry has to proceed not only on the empirical plane of *what is happening* in this sector in a dynamic context but also on the normative plane of *evaluating* the change and of *contributing a strategy* for achieving the desired ends. The enquiry has also to be focussed on the issue whether the disintegration of the peasant economy and society including its traditions in the sphere of values and norms is a necessary part of the modernisation of Indian society. Or can India throw up an alternative road of transition to a modern economy and society? A road, which involves neither brutal dispossession and uprooting of millions of small producers from their traditional means of livelihood and ways of living nor the misery and degradation of sub-human living in the lower depths of an economy developing in a capitalist direction.

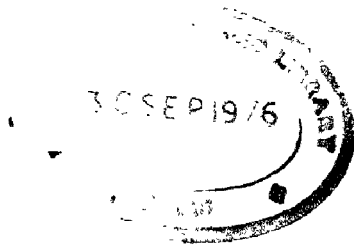
It may be recalled that the historical roots of social science lie deep in the critical and the humanist tradition. Social science in the work of early thinkers served not only to rationalise the emergence of capitalism; it also provided the most powerful critique of the brutality and inhumanity of capitalism. Social scientists were also in the forefront to raise the question of either reforming capitalism or providing an alternative to it. In India in the present phase, *the problem of the Indian peasant* offers to social science the most exciting intellectual challenge both on an empirical and normative plane. To respond to this challenge requires no doubt a high level of technical competence. But before this competence is pressed into service, what is

required is the courage to formulate the more *relevant* questions which may appear very simple, instead of the seemingly complicated questions which may in reality be trivial and irrelevant.

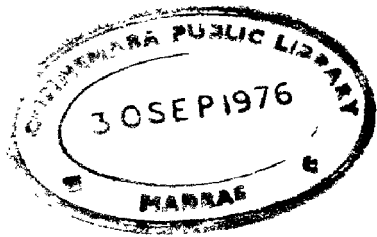


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**PART II**  
**SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY**





**PART I** of this book forms a survey of research on land reforms. An attempt has been made in this Part to provide a selected bibliography of research contributions on the subject from 1947 to 1973. The study of land reforms is closely related to the study of land problems which constitutes a somewhat wider field of study. What has been provided here should more appropriately be called a selected bibliography on 'Land Problems and Land Reforms in India'.

The bibliography includes mostly published research papers and books but, in cases where information was available, unpublished contributions (including Ph. D. dissertations) have also been covered. Newspaper articles have by and large been excluded except in cases where they appeared to be significant from the point of view of the objectives of the trend report.

Land reforms has been and continues to be a subject of great political importance. Consequently, reports of committees and commissions appointed by the Central and State governments from time to time, agrarian documents of various political parties and books and articles by many political leaders also constitute voluminous contributions to the literature on the subject. Not all these contributions deserve a place in a survey of scientific research, though quite a few of them are not less important as sources of insights on the land question than contributions by professional social scientists. Selected contributions from this vast body of literature have therefore been included in this survey. Care has been taken to include contributions specially of those persons who, apart from being political activists, are also recognised as serious scholars of the land problem.

Land reforms is a subject which concerns several disciplines like economics, sociology, social anthropology, economic and social history, law and political science. Even when the focus of the study is on economics, that is to say, even when the study pertains to the economics of land reforms, the economist finds it necessary to draw upon other disciplines for data and insights. He has to ensure that his assumptions regarding the institutional framework of economic activity and the processes of change in this framework are based on knowledge provided by other disciplines. Keeping this fact in mind, the bibliography includes not only the work of economists but also such contributions by social anthropologists, sociologists, historians etc., as provide insights or empirical knowledge about Indian agrarian social structure and changes therein.

The materials included in the bibliography have been categorised under certain broad heads. These should not be treated as watertight compartments but as a broad categorisation adopted with a view to classifying the large number of books and papers on the subject of land reforms.

An important feature of our bibliography is that it covers studies

pertaining to specific regions or States in India. These have been separately classified State-wise with a view to highlighting the state of regional studies of land reforms in India. Regional studies have by and large been excluded from the list of general studies.

It should be clearly stated that the bibliography is only selective but not exhaustive. However, it is intended to be more comprehensive in scope than the bibliographies available at present. Earlier sources of bibliographies of land reforms studies are listed below:

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The bibliography is divided into the following sections and sub-sections:

## SECTION I

### GENERAL STUDIES

- I The Methodology of Agrarian Studies
- II Land Reforms, Agrarian Structure and Economic Development:  
General Discussion
- III Pre-Independence Agrarian Structure
- IV Land Relations and Land Reforms in India: An Overall View
- V Economic and Political Studies also Dealing with the Land Question
- VI Land Reforms Legislation and its Implementation
- VII Agricultural Cooperation and Cooperative Farming
- VIII Land Relations, Land Reforms and Agricultural Growth: An Empirical  
View
- IX The Emerging Agrarian Structure
- X Agrarian Unrest
- XI Socio-Economic Studies on the Indian Villages
- XII Agrarian Structure, Green Revolution and Technological Change

## SECTION II

### REGIONAL STUDIES

- I Andhra Pradesh
- II Assam
- III Bihar
- IV Gujarat

- V Jammu and Kashmir
- VI Kerala
- VII Madhya Pradesh
- VIII Maharashtra
- IX Mysore
- X Orissa
- XI Punjab
- XII Rajasthan
- XIII Tamil Nadu
- XIV Uttar Pradesh
- XV West Bengal
- XVI Union Territories

## SECTION I

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## IX. THE EMERGING AGRARIAN STRUCTURE

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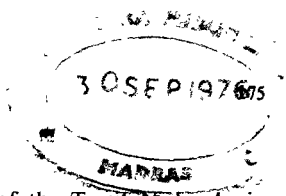
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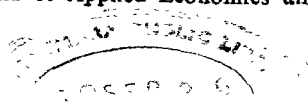
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