



Sociology

Paper - 2

(Topic - B1)

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Rural and Agrarian Social Structure

The idea of Indian village and village studies

- Since centuries village as a socio-cultural unit. Their sustainability, exclusivity matter of historical, colonial, social delight.
- Mentioned in Vedas as
 - Pur
 - Gram
 - Van (Jungle)
- In Puranic texts – Potential hierarchy. (Also mentioned by Kautilya's Arthashastra that gram's appointed leader should pay taxes to Pur's king for protection).
 - Pur – Elites
 - Gram – Commoners
 - Van – Tribes
- Other historical accounts (between 7th and 12th century) talks of different kinds of villages are
 - One caste One village
 - One caste Many villages
 - Many castes One village
 - Many castes Many villages
- Therefore, interlinkage between caste and villages was greatly established.
- Subsequently entry of Islam and Christianity made villages multi-ethnic and multitasked.
- Colonial rule – Systematic study started.

Colonial View Point

People refusing to modernize, White man's burden.

- **Sir Henry Maine**
 - Indian villages have no historic parallel in west. Village self-sufficient, little republics. Rulers come and go, villages self-sufficient forever.
- **Metcalf and Munro**
 - Endorsed this.

- Therefore, colonial scholars developed an ETHNOCENTRIC (WH Sumner/ Eurocentric) understanding of India, that despite poverty, backwardness, orthodoxy, commitment to classical religion, diseases, natural disasters, people of India refused to change and are, thus, WHITE MAN'S BURDEN.

Anti - Colonial/Opposite view

- **O'Malley and Grigson**

- Early colonial scholars had a pre-conceived notion about Indian villages.
- They not able to observe vibrant village life. Anti-colonialists observed
 - Struggle for power in villages.
 - How economic conflicts get resolved.
 - Caste and culture operating to integrate.

- **Karl Marx**

- Gave Asiatic MOP . Indian primitive communism. Common labour and fruit. However tax to kings.
- He believed, political and economical autonomy of India being demolished by British land tenure system. Transformation from classless India to feudal and then finally capitalistic.

Contemporary idea of village

- **Andre Beteille**

- 'The village was not merely a place where people lived; it had a design in which were reflected the basic values of Indian civilisation'.

General features of Indian Villages (as identified by Indian village studies)

(SUDIR)

- Self-sufficiency busted (AB)
- Unity present
- Diversity (inside & outside village) (SC Dubey)
- Identity (source of identity) (MNS)
- Reciprocity (Jajmani) (W.H. user)

Village

- Important source of identity to its residents.
- Reciprocity (Interdependence) implied that though village social organization was hierarchical, it was the 'interdependence' among different caste groups that characterised the underlying spirit of the Indian village.

Social Structure of the Village: Caste, Class and Gender

The Caste System

- While caste was a concrete structure that guided social relationships in the Indian village, hierarchy was its ideology.
- (Caste homogenized) SC Dube - Hindus all over India accepted this classification.
- **Majumdar**
 - Caste divisions determined and decided all social relations. Most scholars saw caste as a closed system. (caste = closed) , varna ≠ caste.
- **Srinivas**
 - However, at the local level caste was 'radically different from that expressed in the varna scheme. Mutual rank was uncertain and this stemmed from the fact that mobility was possible in caste.
- **Dube**
 - Dube's 6 factors that contributed towards the status differentiation in the village community of Shamirpet:
 - Religion and caste
 - Landownership
 - Wealth
 - Position in government service and village organisation; (legal rational)
 - Age; and (traditional)
 - Distinctive personality traits (charismatic)
- Attempts to claim a higher ritual status through, what Srinivas called Sanskritisation, was not a simple process.
- It could not be achieved only through rituals and life-style imitation. The group had to also negotiate it at the local power structure.

- Sanskritisation gave mobility but through secular status first then ritual status > First acquire secular status (land, wealth, govt. service) then you'll get ritual status.
- However, a large majority of them viewed caste system as working within the framework of Jajmani system and bound together different castes living in the village or a cluster of villages in enduring and pervasive relationships.

Land and Class

- Land relations to them reflected the same patterns of hierarchy as those present in the caste system.
- **Srinivas**
 - (Twin hierarchy - Land or Higher caste).
 - There was a certain amount of overlap between the twin hierarchies of caste and land.
- **Lewis**
 - (Primacy of Land).
 - Some others underlined the primacy of land over all other factors in determining social hierarchy in the village.

Gender Differences

- Village studies were not completely "gender blind".
- Further, accounts of man-woman relations provided in these studies were largely based on the data collected from male informants.
- Most of the anthropologists themselves being males, it would have been difficult for them to be able to meet and participate in the "private" life of the village people.
- **Adrian C. Mayer**
 - (Village well).
 - The village well provided a meeting place for all women of non-Harijan castes, and the opportunity for gossip.
- **Twin DoL**
 - Caste, Gender.
- **SC Dube**
 - After caste, gender was the most important factor that governed the division of labour in the village. Masculine and feminine pursuits were clearly distinguished.

- **Srinivas**

- Male work > Female work
- Male Controlling female Sexuality
 - Two sets of occupations were not only separated but also seen as unequal.
 - The dominant 'male view' thought of women as being 'incapable of understanding what went on outside the domestic wall'.
 - Men also had a near complete control over women 's sexuality. Polygyny and concubinage (Cohabitation without being legally married) were both evidence.
- Not every thinker, sociologist or anthropologist agrees with the general opinion of village India as an idyllic social reality.

Dipankar Gupta

- Differs (EPW, 2005).
- (Depressing view of villages)

Hopeless Disenchantment

- "The village is shrinking as a sociological reality, though it still exists as space. Nowhere else does one find the level of hopeless disenchantment as one does in the rural regions of India. In urban slums there is squalor, there is filth and crime, but there is hope and the excitement that tomorrow might be quite different from today.
- Rarely would a villager today want to be a farmer if given an opportunity elsewhere.
- Indeed, there are few rural institutions that have not been mauled severely from within. The joint family is disappearing, the rural caste hierarchy is losing its tenacity, and the much romanticised harmony of village life is now exposed for the sham it perhaps always was.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's analysis of the Indian village

- If anything, it is perhaps B.R. Ambedkar's analysis of the Indian village that strikes the truest of all. It was Ambedkar who said that the village was a cesspool of degradation, corruption and worse. That village India was able to carry on in spite of all this in the past was because there was little option for most people, rich or poor outside the confines of the rural space.
- Village cesspool of degradation, corruption & worse.

Why do Village Studies now

- Apart from industrialisation, one the main agenda for the new political regimes was the transformation of the “backward” and stagnant agrarian economy.
- Development
 - Planning
 - Implementing
 - Monitoring

Method used

- Use of “participant observation”, a method of data collection that anthropologists in the West had developed while doing studies of tribal communities.
- The “participant observation” method was seen as a method that understood social life from within, in terms of the values and meanings attributed to it by the people themselves.
- The method of participant observation also provided continuity between the earlier tradition of anthropology when it studied the tribal communities and its later preoccupation with the village.
- Approaches in village study > MNS > structural functionalism
- SC Dubey > Inter disciplinary
- MC Marriot > Culturology
- AR Desai > Marxian
- Andre Beteille > Weberian

Sociological Approaches to study villages

- Influenced by American Anthropological tradition of ROBERT REDFIELD and British Social Anthro tradition of AR RADCLIFFE BROWN.
- **MNS** – Pioneer – Article “The Problem Of Studying One’s Own Society”.
- He suggested sociologist should not consider
 - Village as microscopic unit of macroscopic Indian society.
 - Reality is vast, unorganized and chaotic. We can’t study entire reality.
- **FG Bailey, MSA Rao, Martin Oran** studied Caste in different villages.
- **Andre Beteille** – Social Stratification in vill Sripuram.
- **Kathleen Gough** – Class Structure in Kumbapeti.

- **FG Bailey** – Power and Politics in vills of Orrisa.
- **AM Shah** – Family and Kinship Jahanabad Gujarat.
- **TN Madan** – Rituals of Kashmiri Pandits.
- **Tulsi Patel** – Gender Discrimination.
- **Amita Baviskar** - Resistance to governmental policies, changing food habits etc.
- **IP Desai** – Sme respects of family in Matina Gujarat.
- **MNREGA** > Jenn Drebe, Ritika Khera.
 - New areas
 - Effect of Globalization, Reproductive voting Behaviour, Politicisation of caste.
- **Dipankar Gupta** > caste in Elections (2000).
 - Concept > AJGR, KHAM, MY. (caste chemistry).
- **Milton Singer**
 - Little tradn and Great tradn and Mckim Marriot - Universalisation and parochialosation show interlinkage of the village with the larger social world.
 - They say that culture and civilization are not in contest in India like in Europe. Therefore, they coin the term INDIANISATION OF MODERNISATION.
- **Willian Wiser**
 - American Sociologist – Elasticity in Jajmani reln.
- **AM Shah** and **MNS**
 - Challenged self-sufficiency using empirical data.
 - After village studies gained momentum, debate started if India can be studied using village studies?

Village Studies

- **Indological Perspective (Textual)**
 - GSG (Attributionist) > Attributer of caste, Dynamism of caste, Kinship, etc.
 - L.D. (Structuralist).
 - KM Kapadia > Family, Marriage, Kinship.
 - Irawati Karve > Kinship system.

- **Anthropological (Field view)**

- MNS > Structural Functional.
- Mckim Maniot > (Culturology) (Traders. Empraised) (Rural – Urban Continuum).
- AB > Weberian (Rural Power Structure) (Stratification).
- SC Dubey > Inter – Disciplinary (Multi – tradition for Social change).

Those who glorified (pro-village studies)

- **SC Dube**

- Indian Villages.

- **MNS**

- Villages in India.

- **Mckim Marriot**

- Village India.

Those against (criticism of village studies)

- Upper caste hindered AB not allowed to interact with lower caste.

- Gender hindered (Lila Dubey).

- **Louis Dumont**

- Criticized MNS for studying both caste and village. Village studies overshadow the primary source of inequality CASTE. (counter – Andre Beteille – vill. study help know tge truth w/o personal bias).

- **Y Singh**

- Studied 6 vill. in UP – studying history of change is necessary to understand reality comprehensively. (Village studies -> Incomplete in themselves).

- **Marxists – (Study Urban centres)**

- **AR Desai** – Vill. study take you away from the empirical truth of socio-economic genesis.
- **RK Mukherjee** – Vill. is land of small farmers, petty traders, wage labourers who are exploited by feuds (and bourgeois) living in urban centres. Study urban.

New Dimensions of Village study

- Social Movements
- Social Dynamics
- Political Dynamics
- Gender profile
- Demographic studies etc.
- Voting Behaviour – Impact of social scheme | PRI

Some Data on Villages

- 2001 Census, rural India -72 per cent of total population.
- Around one-fourth of the total national income.
- Nearly half of India's working population.

Agrarian Social Structure

Land Tenure System

- It identifies the ownership of land and the relationship of the owner with the cultivator. Terms and conditions under which land is leased to the tiller.
- Vedic period. State ownership limited. Common ownership of land.
- Muslim period – assessment of land revenue more systemized and standardized.
- British rule – system of assessment and collection varied according to states and admin convenience.
 1. Who is Owner?
 2. Relation of Owner and Cultivator
 3. Terms and Conditions

3 main systems used by British

Ryotwari

- Independent single tenure. Sir Thomas Munroe, 1820, Madras. Occupant is tenant of state (state is owner of all land). 20-30 years. Revenue as rent and not tax. Eviction in case of non-payment. Assam, TN, MP, Guj, Maha.

Mahalwari

- Joint village ownership. (villages = mahals). Co-sharer selected to take liability on 5% commission. 30-40 years.

Zamindari

- (Permanent Settlement System)
- landlord/intermediaries. Outcome of permanent settlement Lord Cornwallis, Bihar 1793. Why – British reluctance to deal directly, force of loyalists. Who – revenue collecting officers of Mughals (they were not owners). Real proprietors became tenants. State to get 10/11 of rent. Zamindars further leased out (outsourced). Long chain of middle-men.

Peasant Society

- **Peasant**
 - Daniel Thorner : Peasant = Kisan.
- **Peasant Society**
 - Robert Redfield : “Peasant society and culture”, 1956.
- **3 important features of Peasant CULTURE**
 - Highly reverent attitude towards land.
 - Agriculture as noble, ideal, best job.
 - Industrious attitude, dignity to labour.
- **Imp features of Peasant SOCIETY**
 - Family primary unit of social organisation (generally joint, whole family works).
 - Land main source of livelihood.
 - Distinct culture and daily schedule (than landed aristocracy).
- Peasant culture is of obedience and subordination.
- Peasant in de-facto possession of land but not owner. Aristocracy politically awakened and denies peasantry its rights.
- **Sorokin**
 - Rate of social mobility in peasant society is relatively poor. Only defect not de jure
- **AR Desai**
 - INM started as a peasant movement. Jajmani a crucial feature of peasant society.
 - (Orthodox & Traditional) Peasantry – Production for self-sustenance only. Land sacred. Not willing to migrate. Belief in old techniques. Economically poor. Low std of living. Highly influenced by tradition and keep passing it. Religion imp. Superstitious and blind faith in religious texts.
- Peasant society is thus an agri based tradition soc with highly reverent attitude towards land.

Land Reforms and their Social Consequences

- **Land Reforms**

- Major policy for rural development. Designed to break old feudal socio-economic structure of rural India. Impetus to modernization of agri production and productivity.

- **Objectives**

- Equality, Efficiency, Effectiveness, Economy.
- Improving distribution of ownership.
- Agri modernization.
- Modernising irrigation.
- HYV seeds, pesti, ferti etc.
- Improving land use.

- **Steps Taken**

- Abolition of intermediaries.
- Tenancy reforms
 - Fixity of tenure
 - Rent regularization
 - Ownership rights
- Land ceilings.
- Agrarian reorg.
- Co-operativisation of agri.

- **Consequences**

- Because of abolition of interm – 20 million tenants direct contact with state.
- 6 mn hectare of fallow land distributed to landless and marginals.
- 7.7 mn tenants given ownership rights.

- **Social Consequences of LR**

- Shift in the occupation of the lower cates.
- Decline in migration.
- Generation of conflict due to legislation.
- Naxalism – Bihar, UP. Labour Movment – AP.

- Eviction of landless labours.
- Shortage of manual labour at the time of sowing and harvesting in Pb and Haryana.
- Increase in absentee landlordism.
- Policy of land restoration did not touch adversities of tribal.
- Agrarian movements used in politics and terrorism.
- Family > Nuclearised To evade LR.
- Marriage > of conspicuous income. Cave conflicts.
- Naxalism. Gender > Female infanticide.
- Dowry Rural – Urban > Migration checked urban untouched.
- Class > Poor tenants couldn't benefit. Landlers labourers existed.
- Stratification > Class based from caste based.
- Alienation > checked of lower castes.
- Work > changed.
- Mobility > increased.
- Tribal > Unchecked.

Emerging Agrarian Class Structure

- Impact uneven.
- Depended upon the size of holdings.
- Elevated richer tenants.
- But broadened the base of proprietary classes (which now had landlords and rich farmers).

How LR helped Richer Tenants

- Zamindars were to be given compensation by the tenants before they could secure the ownership rights. Basic and Biggest limitation.
- Only rich tenants could pay. Poorer forced to borrow or denied ownership.
- At the same time they lost tenurial security, became “non-owning proletariat” with increased insecurity, obligations and subordination.

Emerging trends in post-independence (summarized by PC Joshi)

- Decline of feudalistic and customary tenancy. Replaced by more insecure and exploitative lease arrangement.

- Increased importance of commercial tenancy.
- Rise of owner-farmers.

Emergence of commercial peasants led to 2 imp socio-eco consequences

- Increased the production and productivity of agric.
- Accentuated class conflicts in villages.

Social Consequences of Green Revolution

GR Definition

- Large scale increase in agri production in a short span of time as a result of appln of HYV seeds, chemical ferti, pesti, machinery. Crops – Wheat. Time – 1966/67 to 1970/71. Area – Pb. etc.
- With the advent of GR focus shifted from LR to optimizing production.
- On a study of 3 villages of Ludhiana, social consequences
 - Caste system undergoing changes. Disappearance of untouchability. Middle class improving, upper class adjusting.
 - Jajmani system declining with work for payment rather than foodgrains.
 - Traditional hereditary privileges weakening.
- On a whole, PEASANTS TRANSFORMING TO FARMERS.
- {Peasants – prodn for self-sufficiency. Farmer – Surplus}.

Controversy due to GR

- Limited reach. Harmful social, economic, environmental, health effects. Termed Seeds of Disaster.

Social Consequences of GR

- Increased disparity. Big farmers (>10 acres) benefitted.
- Small farmers' previously leased land reclaimed. Became landless labourer.
- Increased owner cultivation. Large scale eviction of tenants. Leased area halved in 20 yrs.
- HYV costly. Farmers preferring only skilled labour.
- Labour movements for increase in wages in Kerala, TN, AP.
- Increase in conspicuous income of rich farmers. Relative deprivation of share croppers. Start of Consumerism in rural areas > Vidharbha > Copying of GR ways in absence of GR infra. Leading to suicides.

Changing MOP in Indian Agriculture – Contemporary Topic

- Earlier phases – Jajmani.
- Followed by – Zamindari, Mahal, Ryot.

Now – 2 phases

Post-independence Pre LPG phase

- Most important changes through legislation, LR, GR. (above).

Post-independence Post LPG phase

- **Circulation of labour** – Agriculture commercialized, growth of seasonal migrant agri labor. Jan Breman calls them Footloose labor. They live in poor conditions.
- **Feminisation of agri labor** – Men move outside for work. Also, women labor cheap.
- **Participation in WTO (Dr. K. Somare khana** - Opening of Indian mkts for imports. Imported fruits common. Indian farmers not as adequately supported as European, American ones.
- **Contract Farming** – Though assured return, increased insecurity by dependency on companies, loss of own indigenous knowledge. Products like Cut-flowers divert from food-grain prodn. Production of mainly elite and costly products using ferti, pesti, Not good.
- **Multi-nationalisation of agriculture**- From selling of seeds to marketing produce. Govt agents replaced by profit-driven agents of companies. (Terminating seeds).
- **Farmer Suicides** – while farmers in distress from centuries, suicides relatively new.
 - Sociologists attribute a range of factors.
 - Mainly marginal farmers trying to increase production using GR methods by borrowing.
 - Failing which means heavy debt and suicide.
 - Increasing demand for dowry, better health, education, medical care.
 - Lack of mobilization making agriculturists unable to influence policies.

Globalisation of Indian Farmers

- Dr. K Somasekhara
 - Post WTO Period- Indian farmers will find it difficult to face global agricultural completeness.
- World Trade will become oligopolistic
 - Increased cost of production will lead to decreased returns
 - Development not Gender Neutral (Because lower access to credit, Lower wages).
 - Decrease in welfare-oriented activities

Why High rate of farmers suicides in recent times

- P Sainath –
 - Ecological Crisis + Economic Crisis + Social Crisis
(HYV seeds, (Indebtedness) (Suicide)
Chemicals)

Vandana Shiva + Utsa Patnaik

- Negative growth of agriculture in recent past

Various Studies

- Impact of westernization (Impacts: on class, caste, women) > Srinivas > Rise of MC, Y. Singh > Homogenization & cultural Identity.
- Impact of Migration > Mackim Marxist, Kathleen Gough, AM Shah, Lancy Lobo.
- Impact of Urbanization -> SC Dubey, MSA Rao
 - Feudalistic Tenancy Expiritative le are
 - Commercial Tenancy
 - Rise of owner farmers.
- GR & LR > PC Joshi on LR

Bhalla, Chaddha on GR >

- Disappearance of UT
- Jajmani
- Hereditary privileges
- Rise of relative deprivation of disparity.

Migration

- (IP Desai > Traditional Joint Families Replaced by Functional JF.
- AB > caste weakening. Class ties becoming important.
- Harold Gourd > caste weakening.
- Karuna Ahmad > woman: Status improved but clustered in low status, love in cover job.
- Ashish Nardy > Urbanisation has helped caste mobility.
- MSA Rao > Remittances from cities, helped increase Prestige back home.
- EA Ross > Rural People becoming consumerists.