Land, Labour and Caste:
Agrarian Change and Grassroots Politics in Andhra Pradesh

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CONTENTS

Acknowledgements

Chapter 1     Introduction

Chapter 2     Historical Background

Chapter 3     Secondary Data as Partial Data

Chapter 4     Results of Primary Survey in Nalgonda

Chapter 5     Evolution Of Agricultural Labour Class In India: A Review Of Literature

Chapter 6     Emergence of Backward Castes: Structural Change and Grassroots Politics

Chapter 7     Emergence of Capitalist Landlords: Commercialization and Grassroots Politics

Chapter 8     Stagnation And Out-Migration: Ecology Induced Proletarianisation

Chapter 9     Conclusion
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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Capitalist development has been defined in various ways. Maurice Dobb, in his discussion in Studies in the Development of Capitalism, reviewing the definitions of capitalism, denotes employment of wage labour in the market as the ultimate characteristic of capitalism. While employment of wage labour is an important indicator in itself, another most important indicator, especially in agriculture, is the polarisation of the class/agrarian structure. That is the concentration of means of production (in land in particular) on one side and formation of absolutely landless labouring class on the other. Exposition of this process came widely to be known as the polarisation book. Marx first propounded polarisation book in the volume-1 of Capital in the chapter, ‘So Called Primitive Accumulation’, while dealing with the enclosure movement in Britain. Later Lenin raises the issue in his The Development of Capitalism in Russia. Lenin argues that land concentration inside Russian countryside is taking place and that it is an inevitable process during the development of capitalism – in any country. The small and middle peasants would be swept away by the juggernaut of capitalism. In the Russian debate the process came to be called the ‘depeasantisation’ process. The process otherwise has also came to be called the proletarianisation process. A variation on the theme was the German debate around the same time within the SPD (Social Democratic Party) between Kaul Kautsky and a group of Social Democrats headed by Eduard David. In this debate while Kautsky believed that Polarisation could be a long term tendency --- and not necessarily visible in the short run --- Eduard David et al categorically held that small and middle peasants have sufficient resilience to withstand the force of agrarian capitalism. David and his group questioned the alleged superiority of large-scale agriculture—whether capitalist or socialist. They (David et al) held that small-scale farming is more viable and more rational than large-scale farming. They felt small scale farming even to be an effective alternative to collectivisation. While the debates are of great relevance in the context of socialist agriculture they are also of significant importance in the context of the study of capitalist agriculture. They provide insights into the understanding of structural processes: on whose basis politics operate and evolve. The Indian debate on ‘Mode of Production’ in agriculture too raises questions about the definition of capitalism. The major bone of contention was whether to limit the

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3 V.I. Lenin, The Development of Capitalism in Russia, (Moscow: Progress Publishers 1956).


definition of capitalism to the employment of wage labour alone or to add the criterion of accumulation and reinvestment (on the farm). It was argued by Utsa Patnaik that while emergence of labour power as commodity is a necessary condition; it is not a sufficient condition. She felt that reinvestment and accumulation are the sufficient conditions. Which means that Polarisation process --- which is in turn product of reinvestment and accumulation --- is a definitive feature of capitalist development in agriculture.

The concern of the present book is the examination of polarisation book and entailing politics in particular empirical situations. The emergence of the above said process is a complex phenomenon. As Lenin in the Russian context and noted European historian Robert Brenner in the European context have noted:

1. The process is contingent on the specificity of the circumstances.
2. The process takes place over longue duree and depends on the long established socio-historical structures.

The above discussion though brief, covers the essentials of the debate over the definition of agrarian capitalism. In this book agrarian politics are divided into five varieties; this division into five varieties is only for analytical purpose and overlapping patterns can be found among them, which we elaborate below.

1. Mobilisation of agrarian proletariat/subaltern classes by Maoist political parties and groups for a fight basically through armed struggle. That is the struggles of CPI (MLM) Movements.
2. Mobilization of agrarian classes by parliamentary communist parties essentially for a struggle for reform through the existing politico-economic system for reasons such as better wages, speedy implementation of land reforms etc.
3. Politics of the farmers like that of BKU in Uttar Pradesh, Shetkari Sanghatana in Maharashtra, KRRS in Karnataka and so on. Agrarian Politics basically pitted against the state for better prices on agricultural outputs and waivers on inputs such as loans and so on. These politics in India have relied on quite spectacular (paralysing the state temporarily) mobilisations.
4. Mobilisation of agrarian population in a broad and general sense by various non-communist political parties on different grounds. eg., on ethnic grounds such as the self respect of Telugus or such populist grounds, but basically for electoral purposes. Non-class criteria such as caste and ethnicity become very important in these mobilizations.
5. Finally, agrarian politics i.e. politics of the agrarian classes manifesting in the dialectic of dominance/resistance of everyday life.

The Categories (1), (2) and (3) i.e., the politics of CPI (MLM) movements, the politics of Parliamentary left parties operating within the system and to some extent even the farmers movements, are not mutually exclusive and are overlapping. The point here is that the CPI (MLM) movements and the parliamentary left have also mobilised the farmers for better remunerative prices, loan waivers and proper electric power supply to farmers and so on. This aspect of the Communist politics in broad general sense coincides and overlaps with the mobilisation of farmers by organisations such as BKU.

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KRRS Shatkari Sanghatana and so on. Where the left parties differ with the exclusive farmer’s movements is on two accounts, a) the left parties stress on the agricultural labourers and marginal peasants as vanguard in peasant mobilisation b) On the use of means to achieve the ends. On this while parliamentary left believes in peaceful mobilisation within the system the CPI (MLM) movements believe in armed struggle outside the system. But both the variants of left endorse the struggle against semi-feudal and feudal structures through forming peasant unity. On the other hand the farmers movements champion only the cause of landed farmers while being silent on both the question of agricultural labourers and on the question of semi-feudal or feudal remnants in the agrarian structure. Therefore we can say that to the extent of supporting the land owning peasantry’s economic interests the politics of all the three movements overlap otherwise they are different.

Another point that can be noted here is that the ‘weapons of the weak’ i.e., the every day forms of peasant resistance are also the part of the larger repertoire of left adversarial politics (both non-parliamentary and parliamentary). Where as in, the case of farmers’ movements the confrontation is squarely between the farmers and the state. These above are the aspects of overlap between the politics of peasantry.

The politics of everyday resistance made popular by American political scientist James Scott7 need not necessarily be taking place in isolation from the above said four varieties of agrarian politics but may go hand in hand with them. But what is more prominent to mention is that everyday forms of resistance and politics become significant where some of the other aforesaid variants of politics are not active. That is to say class conflict becomes localised and quotidian where it is not organised systematically either into totally anti-systemic politics or into fully systemic politics.

1.1. Hypobook

In the third world circumstances rigorous Polarisation within agrarian structure is not to be found. Often what goes on is semi-proletarianisation and pauperisation.8 The same for instance is argued for India recently.9 This, however, is not to debunk the existence of substantive agricultural labour class. In the state of Andhra Pradesh also rapid differentiation and polarisation do not seem to be emerging. Polarisation in agrarian structure is not seen to be emerging owing to three important reasons. They are: 1) spread of commercialisation, 2) state intervention and 3) political movements from below. These are considered in detail below.

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I. **Spread of Commercialisation** -- In contrast to feudal agriculture capitalist agriculture takes out incompetent landlords and renders absentee landlordism infeasible. This is the point where feudalism meets its Achilles’ heel. As is obvious from the Dobb-Sweezy debate, in the European context the crisis in feudalism is essentially a crisis of consumption marked by lack of productivity. Absentee landlordism leads to cyclical losses. Which leads in turn to the disposal of lands. Meanwhile some from the small and middle peasant ranks buy the lands. They are propelled by the urge to join the ranks of the rich peasantry. Here Utsa Patnaik's argument that actually the landlords take advantage of the commercialised, post-- green revolution, agriculture and become what she calls the 'capitalist landlords' appears to be a testable hypothesis. In the following chapters we also throw considerable light on this hypothesis and discuss the various nuances of the transformation of traditional landlords into ‘capitalist landlords’. What Patnaik argues need not necessarily be true for all areas of the country. The origins, nature and adaptability of the landlord class of particular situation matter greatly. It appears that it is the particular historical making of a class, which provides clues to the ways in which that particular class evolves. In fact as the discussion in the following book shows the effects of the historical transformations brought about by capitalist agriculture vary even within a geographical region, such as a district, making categorical generalisations about the nature of capitalist development within agriculture extremely difficult. Nevertheless, as long as capital is taken as a concept denoting a relation, a specific production relation with all its attendant dynamics, the study of development of capitalist relations is possible and is meaningful. To illustrate the above mentioned complexity, for instance, what is true for the landlord class of the coastal Andhra need not be true for the landlord class of Telangana. Another reason for the decline of landlord class is their economic diversification and 'modernisation' i.e., spread into merchandise, trade or into the tertiary sector. This also leads to the dilution of the concentration of landholdings. The demographic differentiation among the land owning families i.e., the division of the landlord families is also one of the prominent factors of dilution of land concentration.

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13 See on partitioning and its effects on land ownership a study, D.Rajasekhar, *Land Transfers And Family Partitioning*, (New Delhi: Oxford and IBH in association with Center For Development studies, 1986). And on decline of traditional landlords and the emergence of middle ranking cultivating castes see an excellent, if not an outstanding, study, Peter Lanjou, & Nicholas Stern (eds) *Economic Development in*
2. **State Intervention** – Here state intervention is divided broadly into two types, a) state economic intervention and b) state political intervention. These interventions have been through different state policies. Two aspects of the state economic intervention into agrarian sector are considered in the form of two state policies 1) state policy of irrigation and land reform and 2) state policy of welfarist rural development programmes. State political intervention is again considered here in terms of two state policies, 1) Periodic conduct of regular Panchayati Raj elections 2) The policy of promotion of liberal-democratic politics.

In the above understanding we are clearly stating that state intervention is larger than the concept of state policy; and the latter derives from the former. And this state intervention is further divided into economic and political intervention; each of which are further divided into two sets of state policies. A diagrammatic presentation of which is as below.

![Diagram of State Intervention and State Policy](image)

**State Intervention and State Policy**

This conceptual differentiation is analytical purposes only and in reality both affect and are shaped by each either.

Another important point to note here is that the terms ‘state involvement’ and ‘governance’ are omitted here and are also omitted in the following text because of their generality and vagueness. As mentioned above differentiation of state intervention into economic and political aspects from which respective policies derive is also problematic, as Lenin contended, all politics is also concentrated economics. Therefore throughout the text we use the term state intervention and avoid the terms state involvement and governance; irrespective of the value of those terms.

Going beyond the defining of terms what is contended here is that the state intervention in the agrarian structure 1) in terms of economic policies 2) in terms of political policies to some extent has the effect of blunting the agrarian contradictions.

*Palanpur Over Five Decades* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998) and the literature cited therein.
Welfarist programmes tend to support the small and middle peasantry. These welfarist
programmes along with subsidising rich peasant agriculture also subsidise small peasant
and middle peasant agriculture. While it is true that land reforms have only partially been
successful, they have not been totally ineffective either. Often the state intervention had
both intended and unintended consequences for the change in the agrarian structures.\textsuperscript{14}
State political intervention on the other hand made popular participation in the liberal
democratic politics possible. But there is another part of politics that is considered below.

3. \textit{Political movements from below} - Actively developing Political movements from
below, militant, and being committed to various forms of struggle, challenge landlordism
at socio-ideological plane and politico-economic plane. Owing to a highly alert and
repressive state apparatus the forms of struggle that of Maoists, for example, have
succeeded only to a limited extent. But their major success has been in making landlord--
semi-feudal and capitalist-- agriculture quite insecure if not impossible. These
movements too have unintended consequences and results. The dialectic of class
struggles shapes/determines the strategies of survival of different classes: eg. Where
Maoist/Naxalite peasant movements are much intense we see the landlord class becoming
increasingly urban and successfully entrepreneurial. Here also land often changes into
the hands of middle/small peasants and castes.

Such an above-sketched argument does not exclude the existence agricultural wage
labour class. Substantial differentiation, class and caste dominance, oppression and
inequality---social, economic and political---still exist. On the contrary the argument
attempts to examine whether the agricultural wage labour class is growing owing to the
decline of small and middle peasantry in the context of polarisation. It is not attempted to
systematically prove the hypobook; what is attempted is to place the hypobook in the
context of empirical evidence (both primary and secondary) and to discuss the hypobook
in the context of the empirical evidence.

1.2. Objectives

1. To study the changes in land ownership overtime i.e., 1960-90 through the
study of sample villages and to see whether polarisation/ proletarianisation tendency
taking place.

2. To study the impact of state intervention in agrarian structure, especially
through rural development programmes, land reforms. Attempt is also to see whether
state intervention has any bearing on the changes in agrarian structure.

3. To study whether there have been any political movements from below
since 1960 if so what impact they have on agrarian structure.

\textsuperscript{14} This point was also upheld in the study Athreya, V.B., Djurfeldt, G. and Lindberg, S.
\textit{Barriers Broken: Production Relations and Agrarian change in Tamil Nadu}, (New
Delhi: Sage Publications, 1990). On land reforms in Andhra Pradesh and the causes and
consequences of them see an excellent paper by K.C.Suri and C.V.Raghavulu,
“Agrarian Movements and Land Reforms”, in B.N.Yugandhar (ed.), \textit{Land Reforms in
India: Andhra Pradesh-Peoples Pressure and Administrative Innovations}, (New Delhi:
4. In and through above an attempt to characterise the evolution of agrarian relations and to estimate the extent of the evolution of capitalist relations in agriculture.

1.3. Nalgonda: Justification for the Location Chosen for Study

For the present study Nalgonda district of Telangana was chosen. Reasons for choosing the district are threefold.

Firstly the district has a history of peasant struggles, particularly prior to 1960. The Telangana armed struggle originated in this district only. The feudal oppression being most intense the struggles were also most intense in the district. True the struggles spread to the other districts adjacent, such as Warangal, Khammam etc. But the conflict was centred in Nalgonda district and it was the focal point. Therefore, historically Nalgonda presents a picture with a relatively high level of class-consciousness. (Ian Bedford, Barry Pavier, K. Srinivasulu and others wrote theses on this history). This is the single most important reason for taking Nalgonda as the location for the study i.e., Nalgonda district was the only district in Andhra Pradesh where the Telangana peasant struggle was waged. No other district in no other part of Andhra Pradesh had seen as intense and as famous and as well documented struggle. No other district from ‘Andhra’ and ‘Rayalaseema’ regions of Andhra Pradesh has this distinction. No other district from even Telangana has this distinction. This specificity is what that makes Nalgonda an eminently suitable district for study. The other reasons for choosing Nalgonda for study are mentioned below.

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Secondly, the district Nalgonda has a diversity of agro-economic situation, which is not characteristic of other districts in Telangana. Practically the district is a land of contrasts. Its diversity can be stated as follows: firstly, there is a region, which is totally irrigated and according to that criterion\(^{18}\) is called ‘developed region’. The region so called is

\(^{18}\) This Criterion of irrigation for classification of diversity was developed in an empirical study done by V.Prathap Reddy, “Trends in Rural Unemployment: The Case of
under the canal irrigation of Nagarjuna Sagar Project (NSP) and is irrigated throughout the year by Krishna river waters. The growth, consequently, of productive forces is also very high. It is interesting to see whether the social relations too are ahead of the other regions or not. (For instance T. Scarlett Epstein\textsuperscript{19} studying the impact of irrigation on two villages south of Mysore has argued that irrigation has in fact led to ‘village introversion’ (in irrigated village ‘Wangala’) and to ‘village extroversion’ (in semi-irrigated village ‘Dalena’). Epstein has in fact argued that the social relations of production were more advanced in semi-irrigated village than in the irrigated village. In the course of our presentation we will also see whether such analysis is applicable to our case studies. But our focus is not on the impact of irrigation but on the evolving nature of social relations of production and agrarian politics).

Thirdly, there is the region in Nalgonda, which is partly irrigated. This takes place through tanks, electrified wells and tube wells. Much of the district comes under this region. This is taken again going by the criterion of irrigation as a region with middle level of development. Crop pattern in this region also corroborates this distinction. Considerable extents of dry crops are grown along with wet crops. Rainfall has considerable importance for the region. The Nagarjuna Sagar Project canal waters do not at all touch this region. The levels of ground water also matter enormously for the region's economy.

Fourthly, there is the region of the district where drought conditions prevail almost all through the year and every year. Irrigation is entirely dependent on rainfall and rainfall itself is very scant in this part.

Thus along with historical background the geographical and agro-economic diversity is one of the chief reasons for selecting the district for study. True the other districts in Andhra have also the feature of agro economic diversity but the combination of historical background along with the presence of agrarian diversity is the feature present in Nalgonda district. The political economy, social relations and politics depend in agrarian societies to a large extent on the development of productive forces.

Going by the above it is also clear that ecological reasons play prominent part in determining the socio-economic trends. Even at the expense of sounding ‘vulgarly deterministic’ one should emphasize (for this study) the importance of physical/ecological conditions in determining the possibilities of human as well as political action. Thereby determining the shape and evolution of class structure and also the strategies of survival of the people involved in those structures.

Thirdly, Nalgonda is less researched upon than other districts.\textsuperscript{20} Nalgonda is also particularly less researched upon on the period following the Telengana peasant
movement. There are many activist and academic accounts of the period of the Telengana peasant movement. But very few regarding the succeeding period. We will return to this aspect. Agrarian research on other districts of Telengana such as Warangal, Karimnagar has progressed much further than on Nalgonda district. Particularly excellent research is done on Warangal and Karimnagar districts in the various social science Departments of Kakatiya University. Which is not so the case with Nalgonda, even though, Nalgonda is more close to the capital city of Hyderabad and thereby closer to various universities and research institutions. All this makes Nalgonda suitable for interesting agrarian research.

1.4. From 1960 to 1990: Justification for the Period Taken For Study

After selecting Nalgonda district for study we have taken the period 1960 to 1990 because of the reasons mentioned below: firstly, about this district there is lot of work focusing on the period prior to 1960. Particularly focusing on the period of the Telangana armed struggle and its background. The communist leaders who participated in the struggle wrote about the struggle and their participation and experiences, reflecting on them. This also generated much interest among the academics, intellectuals and scholars across the world. This interest led to Doctoral dissertations and projects. But all this interest was confined only to the period of the Telengana peasant movement. Some light was thrown on the period prior to the movement in each study as the agrarian conditions and background leading to the struggle was needed to be covered. But very little was, however, ever said on the period following the struggle. What has happened in the succeeding period? How have the agrarian relations evolved in the aftermath of the peasant struggle? Which classes, castes have strengthened or declined? How have irrigation, ‘green revolution’ and commercialisation, which have come in the aftermath of the Telangana peasant struggle, affected the people entangled in the socio-economic and political structures of class, caste and the state? These questions have hardly been raised with regard to Andhra Pradesh in general and Telangana or Nalgonda in particular. Have


the above processes accelerated the development of capitalist social and production relations? or have they retarded the development of capitalist social and production relations? These are the major questions we address ourselves to in this book. We are not addressing to the effects of any one event of state intervention or commercialisation or political movements from below such as effects of irrigation (a la Epstein)\(^{21}\) effects of green revolution / commercialization (a la Francine Frankel)\(^{22}\) or effects of a political movement (a la K. Srinivasulu)\(^{23}\) because the period under study was witness to all these processes, and besides a focus on any one of these would have made our own focus much more narrow; even though a narrower focus might have led to the sharper definition of the period under study, it would certainly not have facilitated the attempt to capture the totality of the agrarian process.

We have chosen 1960s, 1970s and 1980s (and to some extent the 1990s) because 1960s have seen the Indian state occupying the commanding heights of the economy and polity and initiating the policy of rural development through intermediation abolition, community development, agrarian reforms, cooperatives and large scale irrigation projects. Nehruvian State generated much hope and enthusiasm in all these aspects, however successful some or all of these projects may have been.\(^{24}\) The latter half of the sixties have also seen the introduction of ‘green revolution’ in agriculture through the Intensive Agricultural Development Programme (IADP) in selected districts of the country. And there was a shift in rural and agrarian development policy.\(^{25}\)

The 1970s and 1980s have seen the further expansion of ‘green revolution’ and commercialisation and their fuller implications. These processes continue till date. Generally, this period between 1970 till the end of the 1980s is seen by social scientists as a period of the expansion of capitalist relations in agriculture. But along with this social and political scientists also note another related process. That is the decline of the traditional social and political order in the countryside and the emergence of lower orders – lower castes and classes—in the politics; all the more particularly in the local politics. (See Frankel and Rao, MSA, Mendelsohn,)\(^{26}\) The decline of the ancien regime is however, uneven and renders itself to empirical investigation. Our hypothesis also argues that the decline of the ancien regime in the countryside can happen not only to exclusive political reasons but also owing to political economy reasons. In the 1990s the decline of

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\(^{21}\) T.S. Epstein, *op. cit.*


\(^{23}\) K. Srinivasulu, *op. cit.*


traditional forms of dominance and emergence of the lower castes and classes into the political arena, are increasingly recognised phenomena.  

The year 1991 is a watershed to the Indian political economy because of the beginning of ‘liberalisation’ process. It has had its own implications. Even though we have specified our study period to be 1960-1990, our study spills over into the period up till mid-nineties because of three reasons: a) the grass root processes such as development of capitalist relations cannot be neatly compartmentalised, what is studied is a long, long drawn out process and it is continuous. b) the process of liberalisation had by early 90s already had negative impact on certain aspects of grassroots political economy and the impact was continuous with the preceding processes eg., on traditional weaving communities. c) in the beginning period of the nineties there was a renewed interest in the prevailing state, functioning and effectiveness of the Panchayati Raj institutions in the country. The 73rd constitutional amendment and the implementation of it in 1993 were seen as a result of that renewed interest in the early 1990s. The Panchayati Raj institutions being the crucial and basic grassroots political institutions this scholar thought it is important also to cover the impact of the new legislation. Thus these three were the reasons for the study period continuing into mid-nineties. Nevertheless with the ‘liberalisation’ process starting in 1991 the researcher thinks that taking 1990 as a watershed is fairly reasonable.

1.5. Methodology

The human reality must be apprehended by a variety of viewpoints, not by one alone, because this very reality is always in part a construct, always in part an image, and only by encouraging difference in perspective and approach can one obtain the needed richness of imagery and consequently theory.

A combination of methods while no panacea for the ills of social research, at least holds the promise of counteracting as well as comprehending the biases of single data sources.

Research on rural transformation usually takes either of the two methods anthropological or survey (economic). This often generates the dichotomy between qualitative versus quantitative methods. In pursuing this research attempt was made to go beyond this


dichotomy. Both survey and participant observation methods were used. These two methods were complemented through secondary data collected from Statistical Abstracts and village revenue records. Attempt was to achieve as much methodological integration as possible. Firstly secondary data was collected from Statistical Abstracts, secondly anthropological data was collected from village studies through participant observation, thirdly a strictly quantitative survey was conducted in four villages i.e., two irrigated and two semi-irrigated villages.

The method chosen for the study was empirical and analytical. We have chosen the tool of sample survey of selected villages from three diverse regions of Nalgonda district, supplemented by the macro data from the district level. Thus the village data forms the primary data and the data presenting the trends in the district in overall manner forms secondary data. The conclusions for the district are therefore attempted to be made basing on both the primary sources and the secondary data.

It is precisely in order not to depend on the official secondary data that a primary survey has been undertaken. Attempt, as mentioned, is made to integrate the survey method with the anthropological method. Survey method chosen for the collection of primary data was through proportionate random sample. Different classes/castes of peasants and landlords were chosen for the survey. For survey purpose a questionnaire was prepared (questionnaire is provided in appendix-1). The interview method was also employed.

For the sake of the sample survey we have taken the sample of two villages from semi-irrigated region and two villages from the irrigated region. From each village we have taken a sample of 50 peasants. Altogether we have interviewed 200 peasants. These villages in which we conducted the primary survey are the same as the ones whose case studies are presented below, namely Somaram and Prajapalle from Ramannapet mandal of semi-irrigated region and Yadpalle and Gudur from Miryalguda mandal of irrigated region. The sample taken here (i.e., 200) is not randomly random and in agrarian studies this is a fairly large sample. The arguments of Ashok Rudra in favour of a smaller but representative sample are extremely pertinent here. As long as it is a survey based on a sample it is not the size of the sample but its representativeness that matters. And we reiterate that in agrarian studies the sample size that we have taken i.e., 200 is fairly large. Added to that we have also seen to it that it remains thoroughly representative by taking a stratified proportionate random sample.

We have prepared a stratified proportionate random sample of each village class wise. The sample was prepared basing on the World Agricultural Census data of 1995-96, which was prepared class wise. The World Agricultural Census data was available for each village in Ramannapet and Miryalguda (semi-irrigated and irrigated respectively)

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31 See the section “Methodological Marriages” in Martin Bulmer, and Donald. P. Warwick, ibidem, pp.275-312. On Indian debates on methodological integration see P. Bardhan, (eds.) Conversations Between Economists and Anthropologists: Methodological Issues in Measuring Economic Change in Rural India, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989).

mandals only from 1995-1996 onwards. The World Agricultural Census Data of 1991-92 was available for Ramannapet mandal but it was not available for Miryalguda. Therefore in order to have uniformity we have taken the 1995-96 data as the source basing on which the sample was prepared. For Devarakonda mandal on the other hand neither the data of 1991-92 was available nor the data of 1995-1996 available. This was the main constraint for including Devarakonda mandal in the sample.

Simultaneously a questionnaire was also prepared. The questionnaire consisted of 50 questions on different aspects of the agrarian political economy. The questionnaire was also prepared with the hypothesis and the secondary data in mind. Thus the attempt was also to obtain longitudinal data regarding land ownership and production relations. The survey results are presented in the form of tables, which are divided along the lines of irrigated and semi-irrigated areas, and basing on the data we discuss the findings. The results of the painstaking primary survey are interesting and enable us to discuss the problem further.

While it is part of common knowledge that Indian villages are caste wise stratified this researcher believes that Indian villages are also class wise differentiated and therefore elaborate differentiation scheme of the village population basing upon land ownership was adopted. We differentiated village population into landlords, rich peasants, middle peasants, small peasants and marginal peasants/agricultural labourers. While interviewing, the period that we seek to cover i.e., 1960-1990 was kept in mind. Primarily data concerning the changes in landholding pattern and class / caste associations were collected. Second importance was given to data regarding the impact of rural development programmes on the small peasants, marginal peasants and the agricultural labourers. Finally the interview method was used for collecting information on class and caste politics of the peasants. Primary statistical survey is from four villages (two semi-irrigated and two irrigated). The village which is totally un-irrigated is left out from statistical survey, following Marx’s dictum that the society that is more developed shows its own image to the less developed ones.

It appears to be necessary here to make a note on the social anthropological village studies practice in India. Social anthropological research in India on rural transformation was pioneered by two social scientists: M.N. Srinivas and Jan Breman. M.N. Srinivas worked on Karnataka33 While Breman worked on south Gujarat34 This researcher took inspiration more from Breman’s work, though insights into rural reality were definitely taken from the classic work of Srinivas’ ‘Remembered Village.’ The tradition of village studies persists till today as a valid method of understanding rural society. In all, this study contains five qualitative villages studies. While stratified proportionate random sample tool was used for the survey, the interview method was used for collecting historical as well as contemporary data in a qualitative sense. Most villages do not have written up village histories, therefore oral historical accounts were the major source of tracing historical antecedents; this was all the more crucial in tracing the change in the nature of oppression in village life, society and politics.

34 Jan Breman, Of Peasants, Migrants and Paupers: Rural Labour Circulation and Capitalist Production in West India, (Delhi: OUP, 1985) and Beyond Patronage and Exploitation : Changing Agrarian relations in South Gujarat, (Delhi: OUP, 1993).
While the debate and dichotomy between the preferability of quantitative or qualitative method persists this researcher believes that both methods are equally important, legitimate and painstaking. But this author’s own bias is towards qualitative method, without, in what so ever manner, undervaluing the survey research. Daniel and Alice Thorner express the same idea while conducting comprehensive review and commenting upon “The Agricultural Labour Inquiry: Reflections on Concepts And Methods”, they say:

To the extent that the General Village Survey included descriptive work, it has produced useful results. The non-quantitative sections of the first volume of the Inquiry furnish for each state a thumb –nail sketch of its characteristic employer- labourer relationships. Although brief, these accounts provide much interesting information on division of labour, types of payment, the various demands upon labour in the course of agricultural year, the terms in the local languages for types of labourers, types of services, perquisites payments, crop shares etc. The collection and publication of these qualitative data is the most valuable service of the inquiry.  

The preference that Thorners show to qualitative methods is applicable to this book too. Though certainly we provide more than thumbnail sketches. We apply qualitative method for conducting the village studies. We have given pseudonyms for the five villages where primary research was done while at the same time retained original names of the Mandals where the villages are located. Considering the diversity in the field two villages each were chosen from irrigated and semi-irrigated regions and one village was chosen from completely drought prone region of the district. Altogether five villages were studied through participant observation method. The villages are Somaram and Prajapelly from Ramannapat Mandal, Yadpalle and Gudur from Miryalguda Mandal and Yepur from Devarakonda Mandal. These three Mandals/regions of the district represent three different levels of development and therefore diversity in the district. By which word ‘development’ here we precisely mean different levels of development of productive forces i.e., Ramannapat Mandal is semi-irrigated, Miryalguda Mandal is completely irrigated and Devarakonda Mandal is completely drought prone. These differences in the development of productive forces have implications for class/ caste social relations, politics and structures of oppression related therein.

1.6. Chapterisation

In the following chapter II presents the historical background to the period 1960-90. This chapter deals primarily with the Telengana peasant movement because there is much

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literature on the movement but very few systematic studies on agrarian structure. Chapter III deals with the secondary data and provides a broad picture of the district and the changes that came about in it as portrayed by official statistics. Chapter IV is a review of literature on the formation of agricultural labour class in India. In it we deal with economic historians as well as political scientists, who wrote about the processes. Chapter V consists of two village case studies from Ramannapet mandal and their summary. Chapter VI consists of two case studies from Miryalguda mandal and their summary. Chapter VII consists of one case study from Devarakonds mandal. Chapter VIII is the conclusion of the book.
Chapter 2

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Nalgonda District was part of Kakatiya kingdom along with Warangal and Karimnagar Districts. One of the chiefs of Kakatiya kingdom built Panagal town two kilometres North East of Nalgonda town and ruled the area. Exact dates as to when Nalgonda was built are not available. The head quarters were later shifted to Nalgonda. After the Kakatiyas the district came under Golkonda Nawabs and later under Asifjahi dynasty. The district continued to be a part of the Hyderabad State till it merged in the Indian Union in 1948.

Nalgonda is bounded on the north by Medak and Warangal districts; on the south by Guntur and partly by Mahabubnagar Districts; on the East by Khammam and Krishna Districts; on the west partly by Mahabubnagar District and partly by Ranga Reddy District. The District lies in southern part of Telangana region, between 16-25 and 17-50 of northern latitude and 78-40 and 80-5 of eastern longitude.

Though there is some work done on the history of Kakatiyas, there is no agrarian history of Kakatiya kingdom. P.V. Parabrahma Shastry’s work on Kakatiyas is basically a political history with a marginal section on agriculture. Where Parabrahma Shastry speaks of the tanks dug by the Kakatiyas and some forms of land taxation and there is no history of agrarian system as such. The feudalism that we come across in the studies done on Telengana armed struggle seems basically to have come into existence during the period of Muslim rulers. Or to put it differently we do not have exact material as to characterise the feudalism under Kakatiyas and to see whether there is any continuity between the two.

The efforts of Kakatiyas to augment productive forces by digging tanks etc. took place mostly in Warangal district and not in Nalgonda District. It is interesting to note that later rulers did not attempt even this kind of effort, and were only interested in surplus appropriation through a system of landlords.

It is important also to note that there is not much work available about the interregnum between the Kakatiyas rulers and the Muslim rulers. Whatever work is available is about the period during the Telangana peasant movement. There are a number of theses done on peasant movement, which briefly deal with the historical antecedents.

During the Muslim rule and prior to the Telangana armed struggle basically three types of land revenue systems appear to have existed. They are

1) **Diwani** or **Khalsa** tenure system
2) **Jagirdari** System
3) **Sarf-e-khas** System

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These three systems of land tenure have come into existence during the period when Salarjung was the Diwan of the Nizam. These systems were streamlined particularly in order to salvage the Nizam from the impending financial disasters. Whatever the reasons, while maintaining the ‘faithful ally’ status with the British colonial state Nizam relied on these three systems in order to maintain what was the largest princely state in India.

Among the land tenure systems Diwani or Khalsa system was akin to the raiyatwari system of the presidency areas of the British state, where the state had direct relation with the peasant (or in this case Pattadars) without any intermediaries. In the case of Diwani or Khalsa systems land ownership rested in the name of the peasants. In the Jagirdari system the collection of land revenue depended on the Jagirdar who were given Jagirs for various reasons. It was in these areas that the feudal oppression was most intense. Sarf-e-Khas areas were those owned directly by the Nizam. The revenue generated in these areas went directly to the personal expenditure of Nizam.

Under Jagirdari systems the main social base of the Nizam state were the Deshmukhs who were given Jagirs ranging from hundred of acres to a lakh acres and more. Often the land spanned over more than one village. For example in the case of notorious Vishnur Deshmukh the jagir consisted of 40 villages. Deshmukhs were also known as Doras. They consisted of upper caste landlords from Brahmin, Reddy and Velama Communities. The atrocities committed by them basically were on the lowest castes, Malas and Madigas.

The oppression by Deshmukhs was quite institutionalised in the form of Vetti (bonded labour) where in free labour (i.e. labour without any wage in cash or in kind) was extracted from the untouchable castes. The overall form of oppression was close to agrarian servitude described by Dharma Kumar in her Land and Caste in South India. In some instances the oppression was more brutal than in presidency areas described by Dharma Kumar. The landlords i.e. Deshmukhs not only resorted to money lending and credit bondage but also to sexual exploitation of the women of the toiling castes. Thus the oppression was multifold and that was what led to the Telangana movement.

According to Barry Pavier38 by the time of the Telangana armed struggle, Telangana in general and Nalgonda in particular had already been incorporated into the world market. Castor and Groundnut were said to be the two important commercial crops, which led to the incorporation of Telangana into the world capitalist economy. Pavier also asserts that the Great Depression indirectly affected Telangana and had particularly beneficent effects to the landlords vis-à-vis other sections of the peasantry. This thesis however is debatable. The opinions are divergent as to what extent such macro-economic causes acted as objective conditions for the outbreak of the movement. Other accounts give more weightage to local factors as immediate causes for the growth of peasant movement.39 Pavier himself acknowledge towards the end of his analysis, that the main factors were subjective rather than objective.

Considerable differentiation of peasantry already existed on the eve of the peasant movement. It consisted basically of big landlords or the Deshmukhs, small landlords,


rich peasants, middle peasants, small peasants and agricultural labourers. The peasant movement was therefore a multi class movement against Deshmukhs and the Nizam. In it even some small landlords and rich peasants played a crucial role supplying cadres as well as leaders. Thus the pre-existing differentiation was not polarised between landlords and labourers sharply.

There is good amount of work done on the nature of feudal oppression. This took the forms basically of Vetti (free labour service) or begar, maamools and rack-renting. The domination of the Doras operating from their Gadis was multifold and it encompassed all areas of rural everyday life. Vetti was done basically by untouchable castes and peasant castes leaving alone the upper crust of the caste system. Nizam State whose social base was the landlords was not only feudal but also a communal state. It actively propagated Muslim communalism.

Particularly through slogans like Annal Malik (every Muslim is a ruler) and various socio-political organisations like the Majlis – Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen and Tebleeg. The communal aspect permeated all through the socio-political and cultural complex. Education was all in Urdu; the dress, language, culture promoted was Muslim. This was done at the expense of the native languages Telugu, Marathi and Kannada. It was against the backdrop of this feudal/communal Nizam and its hegemony that the growth of Telugu nationalism and ultimately communist movement have to be understood.

In the late 1920’s ‘Nizam Rashtra Andhra Jana Kendra Sangham’ (A J K S) was started by liberal, upper caste and particularly urban intelligentsia to propagate Telugu language and to resurrect it from the oppression it faced under the Muslim rule. The goals were basically literary and cultural. Libraries were established in the twin cities of Hyderabad, Secunderabad and other places. The organisation gradually gained momentum. It basically attracted members of urban intelligentsia engaged in liberal professions. Conferences were held in late 1920’s throughout Telangana. Apart from initiating a library movement, the AJKS also attempted to start primary schools in rural areas. This was basically with the aim of spreading teaching and education in the language Telugu. Already by this time the efforts of AJKS were taken note of by the Nizam State and repressive measures, like the closure of schools, were undertaken. Under Nizam education was a means of hegemony. The official language was Urdu. The education system followed and conducted all education in Urdu. The revenue and all other aspects of administration were also in Urdu.

A J K S though basically a literary and cultural organisation also showed sensitivity to the problems of urban merchants, weavers and the rural problem of Vetti. It took up the issues of monetary exaction from urban merchants and weavers by the government. In broad general terms A J K S urged the abolition of Vetti. But these issues were taken up in moderate petitioning tone and the literature generated by A J K S was more concerned with the legal provisions, which could alleviate these problems. In general A J K S sought to solve the above problems within the legal framework provided by the Nizam’s State.

By 1930 two influences seem to have affected A J K S: Firstly, the nationalist (congress) influence and secondly later, but not too lately, the communist influence. In the fashion of Indian National Congress A J K S started organising annual melas, these came to be known Andhra Maha Sabha (A M S). The first A M S was held in March 1930 (at Jogipet, Medak district) and then on A J K S came to be known as A M S. From this
period on there seem to be change in the focus of A M S from cultural and literary problems to agrarian problems. These problems were of two kinds; one: regarding the spread of advanced farming practices among farmers and peasants in general; two: regarding the abolition of Vetti.

Two processes seem to have taken place from this period on. One, the A M S became increasingly progressive, though reformist, and started reaching out to the rural masses; two, the radical groups within A M S i.e., individuals who first were associated with congress but later took adherence to communism (and other progressive groups) opted for a united front policy. Under united front policy the main enemy was seen as the duo of imperialism and its ally feudalism (in this case the Nizam). Therefore these groups opted to work unitedly under A M S. These two processes were taking place simultaneously making A M S an increasingly popular organisation. But the social basis of A M S did not change decisively. The leadership increasingly remained the urban intelligentsia and rural small landlords. Though the A M S espoused progressive ideas and causes its social basis even by 1940 seems to have put serious limitations on its programmes.

Later this situation seems to have gradually been changing the progressive elements within the A M S taking a more overtly political programme against the Nizam’s rule. They also seem to have been overtly patriotic in taking anti-imperialist, anti-Nizam and anti-fascist positions. The members like Ravi Narayan Reddy, Baddam Yella Reddy, Mokdum Mouiddin appear to have participated in various Satyagrahas inside and outside the Nizam’s State. They covertly retained the membership of the communist party. International developments like the developments in the Soviet Union, the inter-imperialist war, the outbreak of the Second World War in general, seem to have hardened their attitudes against the British colonialism and its ‘faithful ally’ the Nizam. During wartime the Nizam’s State imposed levy system through which compulsory grain collections were made from the peasantry at state fixed prices. Landlords in Telangana, appear to have taken advantage of this wartime crisis to increase their oppression. A M S started percolating into rural areas and worked against this.

The Hyderabad State communist party was formed in 1939. A group from A M S joined it. This made A M S an organisation that became exposed to national and international issues as well as the local ones. The inter connections between these three instances: local, national and international came to be understood more clearly. Thus the perspective of the key functionaries of the A M S was broadened and the conditions prevailing in the princely state of Hyderabad came to be seen in the larger perspective. Along with this process the criteria for recruitment into A M S were also relaxed. Two steps in this regard were initiated. Firstly, the membership fee of admission was reduced from one rupee to four annas and later made even less. Secondly, the rigidly followed criterion of literacy as pre-condition for admission into A M S was removed. This along with the widened socio-political concerns of the A M S, made it increasingly acceptable to rural masses. It started becoming popular in the countryside. Thus from being narrow urban based literary – cultural organisation to A M S increasingly became a political one. Rural youth and students were particularly attracted to the A M S. On the other hand A M S too started entering rural areas with the newly acquired leftist programme and attempted to spread its message. The message was essentially anti-feudal and anti-Nizam/British. Thus by the time of Bhongir (a small town in Nalgonda) conference in 1944, which is of particular importance, the A M S became popularly known as Sangam.
Ravi Narayan Reddy was elected in the Bhongir conference as its president. Thus the organisation increasingly became mass based and the tone and tenor changed from one that of a petitioning organisation to that of agitational mass organisation.

Grass-roots conditions—where Vetti was prevalent, the tenancy problems were acute and the war time compulsory levy burdens on the peasantry being atrocious – made the A M S Sangam popular. And Sangam on its part addressed itself to these questions; particularly the problems of compulsory collection of levy, the irregularities and misuse of power during the levy collection, the domination of landlords and generally agitated for what it called a ‘more responsible government’. From this period on the A M S and Congress worked hand-in-hand and the communists within it also conformed to united front policy. On the other hand the Nizam State did not remain unmoved. Along with other communal organisations it started a para-military voluntary force called the Razaakars which not only stood by landlords but also physically attacked and harassed the peasantry. Particularly the Razaakars aimed at the communists and the A M S cadre. One Kasim Razvi led the Razaakars.

The A M S however did not stop increasing in popularity. Either the village youth themselves enrolled in it on their own, or the organisers of the A M S, visited villages and conducted meetings and spread their message. During this period it increasingly came to be known as Chitti Sangam after the membership receipt that the Sangam used to give. Apart from the other questions the nationality question was also quite important during the struggle. The members of the united Front were interested in the linguistic formation of the state. Vishalandhra was as much desired by Communists as it was by the Congress members. Against fascist, communal and autocratic Nizam state the articulation of the nationality question was quite important at that period of time.

The insurrection was sparked off by some major incidents e.g., Vishnur Deshmukh’s atrocities on labourers and small peasants. In an incident, Repaka Ramachandra Reddy, the Vishnur Deshmukh, got a peasant called Bandagi killed by his goons, not being able to reconcile with a legal defeat. In another incident the same landlord killed another peasant called Doddi Komarayya. Similar such instances, which took place in Nalgonda in particular (the Jangaon Taluka then being in Nalgonda), marked the beginning of the insurrectionary period.

By July 1946 communists claimed to have control over 300 to 400 villages in Nalgonda, Warangal and Khammam districts together. On the other hand Nizam responded by banning Andhra conference i.e., A M S and making the propaganda campaign of C P I difficult. There was initially enormous spontaneity in the movement without much training in guerrilla warfare nor having been armed to do so. The result at this stage appears to be popular mobilisation that is ‘spasmodic’ and not much systematic. The A M S Sanghams and Dalams appear to have kept up the morale. The emphasis was on a variety of agrarian matters and rich or not so rich pattadars, tenants or landless labourers were united.

By 1947 while the rest of India was preparing for freedom from the British imperialism the de facto power in Hyderabad had by then was being transferred into the hands of the Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen. Which meant worsening communal situation and increasing anarchy – with Nizam losing control over Razaakars and state administration. By August 1948 the number of these atrocious Razaakars was said to be 100,000.
Cracks started showing up in the United Front alliance by 1948. The communists started parting ways with the Gandhian methods of *Satyagraha*. By January 1948 the alliance was no more compatible with increasing tide of part-spontaneous/part-organised peasant radicalism. The crisis in the Nizam State appears to have helped the communists in organising some sort of parallel government with the help of village samitis and squads. Thus the insurrection seems to have taken hold of even those areas where congress had influence.

There was also an ideological shift within the C P I. The shift was towards ‘Zhdanov line’; prescribed newly by the international communist movement. This meant a shift from United Front policies to unequivocal guerrilla offensives. And this was prescribed for the entire Asia. B.T. Ranadive replaced the chief architect of the United Front policy P.C. Joshi. And he strongly supported every revolutionary upsurge. This gave strong ideological justification for the armed struggle in Telangana.

In this period the C.P.I. held deep popularity and strong hold over the Telangana in general and Nalgonda in particular. *Gram Rajyams* and village *Samitis* appear to have functioned very well. Arms seem to have been smuggled in from the delta areas of the Krishna District. According to D.N. Dhanagare,40 “by the end of August 1948 about 10,000 peasants, students and party workers actively participated in the village squads and some 2000 in the special mobile guerrilla squads”.41

The Indian army marched into Hyderabad State in September 1948. Immediately after coming the Army suppressed the *razakars*. Later the Army turned forwards the communist squads and ruthless suppressed them. The Telangana movement thus came to an end by 1948. During the movement the communists basically fought against the *Deshmukhs* who owned thousands of acres of land. It was a multi-class movement in which even rich peasants and small landlords participated. During the struggle the movement fixed land ceilings. These were rather generous. At first the ceiling was fixed at 500 acres. It was later reduced to 200 acres. Finally the ceiling was put at 100 acres of dry land and 10 acres of wetland. But these were not implemented rigorously. By the time the communists were about to implement the land reforms the Indian Army entered the scene. As K. Srinivasulu opines much land concentration remained intact in the hands of the landlords in spite of the movement. The Indian Army administration enacted the *Jagir Abolition Regulation* in August 1949; which had some impact on the agrarian structure.

All in all by 1950 considerable land concentration still remained in the hands of the *Doras* and rich peasants. This did not change much in the succeeding ten years up to 1960. The communists succeeded in putting an end to *Vetti* and other atrocities of the *Deshmukhs* but they did not alter the agrarian structure radically.

As we stated in the beginning of this chapter there are a number or studies on the Telangana peasant movement. But few studies on the agrarian structure, K. Srinivasulu’s thesis which studies the change in the agrarian structure during the movement holds that the movement failed in effecting major change in the land ownership pattern. In the 1959


statistical abstract prepared by the government of Andhra Pradesh there are statistics on
land holdings for the whole of the Telangana region. Particular statistics of Nalgonda
district are not available. But available statistics on Telangana show that considerable
land concentration existed in Telangana by 1959.
By 1959, in Telangana as a whole there were 9,297 holdings above 100 acres, covering
the area 10,33,823 acres; there were 4,044 holdings above the size of 300 acres, covering
the area 9,76,340 acres; there were 560 holdings above the size of 500 acres covering the
total area about 2,51,280 acres; and there were about 1170 holdings of ownership size
more than 1000 acres covering the area of around 13,56,000 acres. These figures are for
the whole of Telangana region what they show is the rough picture of land concentration
in Telangana by 1960.
In the following chapter we present the macro-picture of certain basic aspects of the
district. Land ownership pattern is one among them. The data collected from secondary
(i.e., government) sources shows considerable change in the agrarian structure between
1960-1990. While this chapter presented the historical background of the district the
following chapter presents the macro-picture of change – as portrayed by official
statistics – between 1960-1990. We find that the land concentration mentioned in the
above paragraph gone down substantially after 1960; at least as the official statistics show
the trends. We discuss these trends in the rest of the thesis presenting the secondary data
in the next chapter.
Chapter 3

SECONDARY DATA AS PARTIAL DATA

In this chapter we present the secondary data regarding the various agro-economic, sociological and political aspects of the district. Secondary data was collected mainly from the statistical abstracts prepared by the government of A.P. From these abstracts data was collected for Nalgonda District, covering the period 1960-90. The data was collected on following aspects:

1. Basic geographical and agro-climatic data; and trends within them.
2. Agricultural data along with its trends over time.
4. District data on social sector and trends within them; particularly trends in primary health and education sectors.
5. Rural development statistics and trends within them for the entire district.  

The data on the above said aspects was collected mainly from the Directorate of Economics and Statistics, AP; Centre for Economic and Social Studies; the National Institute of Rural Development provided The Statistics on rural development programmes. The rural development statistics could not be collected from 1960 onwards. As they were available only from 1980 on i.e. since the inception of the IRDP programme.

Attempt was made to collect data on land reforms; but only in vein. Official information on the implementation of land reforms is extremely difficult to get and nowhere in the government statistics do we find mention of either the land distributed or to be distributed.

As mentioned earlier in this study the secondary data is used essentially as supportive and partial data. Presenting the data does not mean that we entirely endorse the conclusions that flow from that data. Attempt is to compare the district level data and information collected firsthand; and the contrasts are sought to be discussed to the possible extent.

The degree of reliability varies even within the secondary data between different heads. Information and data under some heads is more reliable than the others and on certain matters only the government can provide data - such as on rainfall for example. At the same time extremely crucial aspects such as the number of agricultural labourers in the district, the government data is quite unreliable. Therefore it follows that while depending on the secondary data is inescapable in certain matters, it has to be taken with care in certain other matters.

3.1. Trends in the Secondary Data

The secondary data presented here is basically the district data. Therefore the trends within it are basically the macro district trends. Below an attempt is made to

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42 The narrative on social sector, rural development statistics and population of SCs and STs is provided in the text while the statistics are provided in the appendix-2.
discern the trends in various aspects of the data for the years 1960-90. Basic geographical data is collected for Nalgonda district on two important aspects: firstly, on the pattern of rainfall for the past thirty years and secondly, on the pattern of land use. Figure 2 is the graph on rainfall data in the district. The district and its agriculture being essentially rain fed; rain fall had tremendous significance for the area. In order to have a comparative picture average rainfall of the district was taken along with the annual average of the state. The contrast then is revealing. The graph on the rainfall pattern show that the annual average rainfall of the district Nalgonda is always below the Andhra Pradesh state average. In all the thirty years that we have data for only once i.e., in 1978 that the district average comes close to the state average of 1150 millimeters. What is worse is that for every five to six years the district faces an acute drought. Whose effects last for the succeeding two to three years. Perhaps it is not entirely incorrect to describe the district as a chronically drought prone district with periodic crises. According to the environmentalist Vandana Shiva the water requirement for the main crops such as rice, annually, is 700 mm.\footnote{Vandana Shiva, \textit{Ecology and the Policies of Survival: Conflicts over Natural Resources in India} (New Delhi: Sage, 1991).} In the crisis years in Nalgonda the rainfall goes as low as 470 mm (eg. 1972-73): which means that only barely food/subsistence crops can be grown there. What this periodic crisis tells about is the importance of the productive forces and their state of development for the evolution of the agrarian political economy. The nature of social relations depends on the overall dynamic of the agrarian political economy. And in this specific case of Nalgonda also the same applies.
The data on land use pattern is presented in the Appendix-2 and it shows that a wide gap exists between the area sown and the area irrigated. Which means that the agriculture essentially is dry-land agriculture. We also see that excepting for the year 1975-76 the gap between the area sown and area irrigated remains consistently large.

Such a vulnerability of agriculture has consequences for all classes of peasantry and land owning gentry. What is to be inquired is what impact such vulnerability has on the agrarian structure and how different classes cope with it. It is also to be seen whether land transfers take place during the acutely crisis ridden years. Particularly in this regard the data on rainfall is much useful- as it allows us to identify the most acutely rain-scarce, drought years. It is in this sense that the data on productive forces sheds light on the changes in land ownership relations.

One major drawback with this data is that there is no information on the intra-district variations. As stated earlier Nalgonda district is ridden with geographical and agro-climatic diversity and it is not known how the three main regions of the district are prone to the ecological vulnerability. This absence and non-availability of data (comprehensively) also makes the intra-district comparisons difficult. Nalgonda district is characterised with significant ecological diversity and the different ways in which agrarian structures respond to the ecological imbalances can only be studied at the ground level.

3.2. Agricultural Data

The secondary data on agricultural scenario can be divided into three categories:

a) Data on agrarian structure
b) Data on irrigation
c) Data on crop pattern

a) Data on agrarian structure was basically collected from the *Statistical Abstracts* prepared by the government of Andhra Pradesh. This data is collected by the government as part of the World Agricultural Census. This information is collected for every five years. Though the period of study for this thesis is from 1960 to 1990, the data is available only from 1970-71. For the prior ten years the data is simply not available. Though as baseline statistics we can rely the World Agricultural Census.

Secondly, the data on agrarian structure (i.e. land ownership pattern) is available for the district in totality, and not region-wise within the district. Thus we have information that does not allow us to make intra-district comparisons. It is true that the district ‘Handbooks of Information’ provide some region-wise data but the handbooks are prepared for this district only since 1985. Which therefore are not of much use.

The data on structures is provided diagrammatically (through bar diagrams) in this thesis because it makes the comprehension of trends in a glance easy. In the data on agrarian structure we have information divided into three heads: firstly under ‘Area Operated According to Holding Size’; secondly ‘percentage distribution of area operated’ --- all these for two decades 1970-1990. The following are the figures showing both.
If we see the trends in the area operated according to holding size over the years 1970-90 we can see that area operated in the holding sizes 0-05 to 4-5 hectares has increased substantially. See that area operated under the holding sizes 5-10 hectares to 50 plus hectares has declined drastically, which means that over the years area operated under small holdings has increased. While the area operated under bigger holdings i.e., 5
hectares and above has decreased. That means that smaller holdings of particularly of 1 to 4 hectares size have increased rapidly at the expense of big holdings of (the size) five hectares and above. This can safely be interpreted as a trend towards land fragmentation rather than a trend towards land concentration. Particularly area operated has increased at a very fast pace under the size holdings 1-2 hectares to 3-4 hectares.

The percentage distribution of area operated in different size class of holdings also supports the above claim. But the bar diagrams present a slightly different picture. According to this data while the percentage of area operated a big holdings (10 hectares and above) has decreased, still a substantive amount of area (about 17-18% of the total arable area) is operated in 1990-91 under the above said big holdings. The figure is presented below.

But the general trend even when stated in percentages is the same. Over the period of past twenty years the percentage of land under small and medium holdings has increased while the percentage of area operated under big holdings i.e., ten and above hectares has come down (approximately from about 38% to 17%): tempting one to jump to a generalisation that while substantive land deconcentration has taken place there is still also significant land under big holdings and that landlordism (whether semi-feudal or capitalist) is alive and kicking.

The trends in percentage distribution of number of holdings (according to

Figure 5: Percentage Distribution of Area Operated in Different Size Classes(1971-91)
different size classes) are much more dramatic. They are presented in figure below. They show that land fragmentation i.e., the multiplication of small and tiny holdings has gone on at a fast pace. The diagrams show that in 1990-91 nearly 47% of total land holdings were in the category of zero to one hectare. The trends are also clear that the percentage of holdings under ten and above hectares category have prominently come down.

So the trends are two fold in the main regarding the agrarian structure: firstly, there is a clear and obvious trend towards deconcentration. Secondly, within or along with the process of deconcentration there is a process of land fragmentation.

There are two more important limitations to the above kind of statistical exposition. One, such expositions do not give any clue to the qualitative aspects of agrarian structure and agrarian relations. Two, the trends observed are too general to understand the intra-district variations.

3.3. Agricultural Labourers
Secondary data on agrarian structure also provides information on the number of labourers and cultivators. We have this data for the entire period 1960-90. Absolute number of agricultural labourers and cultivators have been collected at four decadal time points i.e., for the year 1960, 70, 80 and 1990. But of all the data this data is the most unreliable. We come to this point below.

Whatever data we are provided with by the statistical abstracts shows interesting trends. They are presented in the below figure. In 1960-61 the absolute number of cultivators was more than that of absolute number of labourers. In 1970-71 the absolute number of the both categories for district Nalgonda were equal. In 1980-81 the data shows them again equal but in larger numbers. But it contrast to that in 1990-91 the number of the agricultural labourers goes significantly up. While that of the cultivators remains same as in 1980-81. This raises questions. *Why did the number of the labourers increase between 1980 and 1990? Is it because of the proletarianization?* Or is it simply owing to the absolute growth of the number of people in the labouring class? What is the subregional picture?

Returning to the reliability of the data on the number of cultivators and labourers we should note that the definitions of these categories changed form one census year to the other. Often in the definition of agricultural labour for instance the children of particular age and the old people of definite age are excluded. This in turn leaves out a large body of child labourers and elderly labourers. Therefore in the actual reality a large number of labour force remains, which does not get into the official list of labourers. This makes the data of labourers quite unreliable for any year.

Same can be said of the data on the number of cultivators, because the very notion of the ‘cultivator’ is vague. Who for instance can be called a cultivator when most
labourers also own some land and many land-owning cultivators also hire out their labour power?

Owing to these problems it is very difficult to generalise on the differentiation process relying on the official data. Only a primary survey can give the true picture and also a picture of the variations within different regions. Since Nalgonda has a green revolution region as well as non-green revolution region an exact portrayal of regional variation in the differentiation process is possible only through a primary survey.

3.4. Irrigation and Water

Data on the pattern of irrigation too shows interesting trends. Researcher collected data for the period 1957-1990. In Nalgonda district irrigation takes place basically through three major means. They are wells, tanks and canals. Though there is a boom of late in tube well sinking we do not have any data on that. The statistics in Appendix-2 present the picture of land irrigated by sources of irrigation.

The canal irrigation in the district was minimal in 1957 and we see that it goes steeply up during 1965-66. The land irrigated under canals increased rapidly during that year. This is probably owing to the expansion of irrigation under the newly constructed Nagarjuna Sagar Project. From 1966 onwards land irrigated through canals remains steadily high, except during the year 1987-88 when canal irrigation dips somewhat low. Otherwise there are only minor fluctuations in the canal irrigation profile.

Irrigation under tanks on the other hand shows a decreasing trend. Not only the lands under tank irrigation declining it is also prone to the greatest amount of fluctuation. This is understandable because tanks are filled only by rainfall and the rainfall fluctuates drastically for this district. We can see from the statistics that the land irrigated under the category ‘other wells’ is low but steadily increasing between 1957-90.

What appears from the above description of the trends is that for the district as a whole the importance of tank irrigation has come down whereas the importance of canal and electrified wells has increased. Which means that besides canal irrigation there is increasing reliance on the ground water. The graph on the trends pertaining to the land irrigated more than once also show extreme fluctuation. It shows how difficult it is to grow a second crop and how much rain-dependent the entire agrarian economy is.

Again a major drawback with this data is that it does not give any scope for intra-district comparisons. Given the fact that canals irrigate only a part of the district we are compelled to understand that a major part of the district is exposed the vagaries of nature. The data on irrigation also does not give clue as to which size/class holdings benefit most from whatever assured irrigation that takes place. Which class of peasant benefits most from the existing irrigation facilities can only be studied through the primary survey. This aspect is of crucial importance as it has significant bearing on the agrarian structure.

3.5. The Crop Pattern
Under the data on crop pattern we have a graph. The trends in the graph are for the period 1960-90. The graph showing the area sown under food and non-food crops clearly tells area under food crops is consistently larger than area under non-food crops.

While both are fluctuating over time it appears that area under food crops has fluctuated more than area under non-food crops. The data in the final analysis tells that Nalgonda is a region where the growth of commercial or industrial crops is much less when compared to the traditional food crops. The data also tells that this has remained consistent over the period 1960-90. Though since early eighties the gap has been closing in, it is still quite large.

The statistics in Appendix-2 showing the data on percentage of area under principal crops to the area sown gives a more comprehensive picture of the variation in the crops grown. One fact that stands out is that percentage of area under paddy cultivation has gone up tremendously, while that of other food crop has come down. In 1960-61 the percentage of area under paddy cultivation was only around 17%, whereas in 1989-90 the percentage of area under paddy cultivation was well above 37%. The percentage of area under jowar has steadily come down since 1960. While in the percentage of area under jowar cultivation was around 32%, the same in 1989-90 was around 12%. Among non-food crops the percentage of area under castor cultivation has grown only modestly from 15% to 23%. Considering the fact that castor is the only major non-food commercial crop grown in the region increase in its production is important.

From 1984-85 onwards there is slight, marginal appearance of cotton as well on then scene. In 1989-90 the percentage of area under cotton cultivation of the total area sown was around a moderate 20%: this was a sign that in future commercialisation of agriculture is going to play some role.

The second most important commercial crop grown in the region is groundnut. The percentage of area under groundnut cultivation though has seen an overall increase.
there has been much fluctuation in it. From 5% of the total area sown in 1960 to
groundnut cultivation rose to around 10% of the area in 1990. In between in 1978-79
groundnut cultivation has gone even up to 14% of the area but again fell down to around
7% of the area in 1984-85.

All in all, the trends in crop pattern for the district show that there has been a
marked increase in paddy cultivation. It has become a part-commercial part-food crop.
Other food crops such as bajra, jowar have declined in importance. On the whole it is a
food crop economy.

3.6. State Intervention in Social Sector

The social sector was defined as consisting of two important sub-sectors, namely,
education and health sectors. Under education, data was collected basically on schools
and not on higher education, because in rural sector it is schools, which matter mostly.
Whereas for health sector three indicators were taken that are firstly, the number of
government hospitals and dispensaries, secondly, the total number of beds available and
thirdly, the total number of doctors available.

The data was collected for the years 1960-90. The trends in the data in Appendix-2 on
the education sector show that primary schools have seen spectacular rise in number.
Starting from a mere 79 schools in 1960-61 to 1629 in 1986-87. It is in upper
primary and High School divisions that the growth is slack. From 4 to upper primary schools rose
to the number of 303 between 1960 and 1987. The number of High schools rose from a
number of 31 in 1960-61 to 295 in 1986-87.

In the health sector the number of hospitals and dispensaries, interestingly,
fluctuated. Starting with 34 in 1960-61 the number of hospitals and dispensaries went
down to 29 in 1981-82 and again rose to 77 in 1990-91. The number of hospitals beds on
the other hand rose steadily from 289 in 1960-61 to 850 in 1990-91. The number of
doctors rose from 27 in 1960-61 to 176 in 1990-91.

These absolute numbers perhaps tell us little about the extent of state intervention
unless they are compared to the rise in population and demographic pressure as well,
Unless they are weighed against the growth in population these figures can be misleading
in as much as they show only increase in absolute numbers.

3.7. Rural Development Statistics

Statistics on rural development programmes implemented by the government
were collected from the National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD). Hyderabad.
The statistics were collected for the entire Nalgonda district.

There are major problems in collecting the rural development statistics. Firstly,
they are not available for the study period 1960-1990. Statistics on the programmes
implemented are available only from 1980 onwards. This is precisely since the inception
of the integrated Rural Development programme (IRDP) by the Central government.
The situation is such that researcher considers himself fortunate that he could collect some
data on rural development programmes at least since 1980 onwards. As later fieldwork
has shown often no data is stored on rural development programmes either at mandal
level offices or at district level offices of the state government. Given the absence of
information we do not know whether any programmes were implemented or not between 1960-1980. We have statistics in Appendix-2 showing the trends in investment in rural development programmes and the various types of government investment in these programmes. We have statistics on total receipts and expenditure, subsidies given, credit provided and on the number of beneficiaries.

As we mentioned earlier these only cover the period 1980 to 1988. But what is interesting to note is that even for eight years under consideration the fluctuations in the programme implementation are great. Though the ‘total receipt and total expenditure’ statistics show steadily ascending lines the other graphs on subsidy, credit and on number of beneficiaries show great amount of fluctuation and are reflective of the inconsistency of the governments (at the state and centre levels) in implementing the programmes. Of all the data provided in the form of graphs one finds the greatest amount of fluctuation in the graph showing the number of farmers, labourers and artisans covered under IRDP. Since the data on rural development programmes is available only for eight years (1980-1988) out of thirty years of our study period we cannot comment too much on that. Nor can we significantly rely on that data.

3.8. Electoral Performance of Political Parties

Data on the electoral performance of the political parties was taken from different research Theses done on the electoral politics of Nalgonda district. For electoral performance of the political parties in the performance in assembly elections between 1952-1989 was taken as the criterion. The data shows the percentages of votes polled for each party in the successive assembly elections. The main parties considered are the Indian National congress, the CPI, the CPI (M), the TDP and the independents.

We see that there is a decline in the votes polled for the CPI. The decline is from about 68 percent in 1952 to about 11 percent 1989. The CPI (M), which started participating in assembly elections in the district from 1967, too has seen steady decline of the percentage of votes polled. The congress party has seen ups and downs in the past thirty years but is performance is relatively stable. The Telugu Desham Party, which started participating in the assembly elections since 1983 only, now (i.e., in 1989) scores maximum votes about 45 percent. As we see later this is because of a combination of reasons. Primary survey shows that the success of the Telugu Desham Party is owing to the alliance it struck with National Front parties, CPI (M) and owing to the political emergence of the backward castes in local politics in securing whose votes TDP succeeded.

3.9. Population Trends of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes

The data on population of the scheduled castes (S.Cs) and Scheduled Tribes (S.Ts) was taken from the statistical abstracts prepared by the government of A.P. The trends show that the percentage of the SC population, out of the total district population, has increased only marginally, form 17.1 percent in 1960-61 percent in 1960-61 to 17.7 percent in 1990-1991. The figures for ST population on the other hand are available only from 1970-71 onwards. But from 1970-71 onwards, whence the ST population was only 0.03 percent, it saw an increase to 9.7 percent. The figures of the SC and ST population
are important in the sense that it is they who form the majority of the agrarian labour force and marginal farmer category in the district.

This chapter aimed to present the macro trends in the district secondary data on various aspects. In the following we discuss the data collected during the primary survey and discuss its findings.
Chapter 4

RESULTS OF PRIMARY SURVEY IN NALGONDA

The primary survey was done in four villages: two semi-irrigated and two irrigated. We have omitted totally drought prone village of Devarakonda mandal, because the basic data was not available. In the villages in which the primary survey was conducted from each village we have taken a sample of 50 peasants. Altogether we have interviewed 200 peasants. These villages in which we conducted the primary survey are the same as the ones whose case studies are presented below, namely Somaram and Prajapalle from Ramannapet mandal of semi-irrigated region and Yadpalle and Gudur from Miryalguda mandal of irrigated region. The sample taken here (i.e., 200) is not randomly random and in agrarian studies this is a fairly large sample.\textsuperscript{44} The arguments of Ashok Rudra in favour of a smaller but representative sample are extremely pertinent here. As long as it is a survey based on a sample it is not the size of the sample but its representativeness that matters. And we reiterate that in agrarian studies the sample size that we have taken i.e., 200 is fairly large--added to that we have also seen to it that it remains representative by taking a stratified proportionate random sample.


(a) Semi-irrigated region

Basing on the data we generated during the primary survey we are able to present two tables on pattern of land ownership and land control for both semi-irrigated and irrigated regions. Structurally, we are presenting the data for the five agrarian classes i.e., marginal peasants, small peasants, middle peasants, rich peasants and landlords. The results of survey for each class in two different regions are presented below.

Marginal peasants in the semi-irrigated region (33 sample households) owned and controlled 26.38 acres in 1960 whereas in 1990 they owned and controlled 33.28 acres. This is an increase of about 6.9 acres i.e., an increase of about 20.9%.

Table-1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Peasant classes</th>
<th>Land owned</th>
<th>No.of House Holds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

\textsuperscript{44} Ashok Rudra, “Field Survey Methods” in Pranab Bardhan (ed) \textit{Conversations between Economists and Anthropologists: Methodological Issues in Measuring Economic Change In Rural India} (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989).
Small peasants in the semi-irrigated region, i.e., 43 sample house holds, owned and controlled about 84.32 acres in 1960; whereas in 1990 this increased to about 130.95 acres. This is an increase of about 46.63 acres. This is a substantial increase. Middle peasants in semi-irrigated region (14 sample households) held about 60.75 acres in 1960; whereas in 1990 the land under their control increased to about 85 acres. This is an increase of about 24.25 acres. Rich peasants (7 sample households) held about 156.88 acres in 1960 whereas in 1990 they held about 84.38 acres. This is a decrease of about 72.5 acres, which is a substantial decrease. Landlords (3 sample households) owned and controlled about 125 acres in 1960; whereas in 1990 they held about 91.5 acres. This is a decrease of about 33.5 acres. Certainly the above presented data shows that in the semi-irrigated region, between 1960 and 1990 the first three peasant classes i.e., marginal peasants, small peasants and middle peasants have gained land while the rich peasants and land lords have lost some land. The gains are substantial for small and middle peasants while for marginal peasants the gain was not as substantive.

(b) Irrigated region

In the irrigated region the data we generated different and mixed trends. Marginal peasants in the irrigated region (39 sample households) owned and controlled 24.9 acres in 1960; whereas in 1990 the land they controlled was about 25.70 acres. This was only an increase of about 0.8 acres.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Peasant classes</th>
<th>Land owned</th>
<th>No. of House holds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marginal</td>
<td>24.9</td>
<td>18.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table-2

Land ownership pattern among different peasant classes in the irrigated region between 1960-1990 (Yadpalle 50+Gudur 50=100 households)
peasants
Small Peasants 77.7 65.91 54.48 67.32 40
Middle Peasants 30.78 52.77 32.14 39.94 11
Rich Peasants 113.52 80.47 56.5 58.50 6
Land Lord 84 74 84 94.00 4
Total 330.9 291.85 256.94 285.46 100

Source: Primary Survey by V.Anil Kumar

Small peasants (40 sample households) held about 77.7 acres in 1960. In 1990 they held and controlled about 67.32 acres. This is a drop of 10.37 acres. The small peasants have in fact between 1960 and 1990 lost some of their land. Middle peasants (11 sample households) in the irrigated region owned and controlled land of about 30.78 acres in 1960. In 1990 they held land of about 39.94 acres. This is a gain by middle peasants of about 9.16 acres.

Rich peasants in the irrigated region (6 sample households) owned and controlled 113.52 acres in 1960; whereas in 1990 they controlled only 58.50 acres. Here is a drop of about 55.02 acres of land ownership. Land lords in the irrigated region (4 sample households) controlled 84 acres in 1960; whereas in 1990 they controlled about 94 acres. This is a gain of about 10 acres.

4.2 PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF LAND BETWEEN CLASSES OVER THE PERIOD 1960-1990 IN THE SEMI-IRRIGATED AND IRRIGATED REGIONS

(a) Semi-irrigated region:

The marginal peasants of the semi-irrigated region in the sample owned about 5.81 percent of land in 1960. In 1990 this increased to 7.82 percent. This was a steady increase.

Table 3

Percentage of distribution of land between various peasant classes over the period of 1960-1990 in the semi-irrigated region (Somaram 50+ Prajapalle 50=100 households)

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<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marginal peasant</td>
<td>5.81</td>
<td>7.37</td>
<td>7.79</td>
<td>7.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small peasant</td>
<td>18.60</td>
<td>24.31</td>
<td>26.43</td>
<td>30.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Peasant</td>
<td>13.40</td>
<td>15.83</td>
<td>18.79</td>
<td>19.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rich Peasant</td>
<td>34.62</td>
<td>25.19</td>
<td>24.82</td>
<td>19.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Lord</td>
<td>27.57</td>
<td>27.30</td>
<td>22.17</td>
<td>21.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary survey by V.Anil Kumar
The small peasants of semi-irrigated region owned about 18.60 percent of land in 1960; this increased to about 30.83 percent in 1990. The middle peasants in the semi-irrigated region owned land of about 13.40 percent in 1960 and this has increased to about 19.99 percent in 1990.

The rich peasants and landlords show a different tendency. The rich peasants in the sample owned and controlled about 34.62 percent of land in 1960 and this has decreased to 19.84 percent in 1990. Landlords too have lost land. The landlords of the semi-irrigated region were controlling land to the tune of 27.57 percent in 1960. This has decreased to 21.52 percent.

(b) Irrigated region

In the irrigated region the marginal peasants have increased their share of land from 7.52 percent in 1960 to 9.00 percent in 1990. However this is not a steady increase and there are ups and downs over time. In 1980 for example the marginal holdings were about 11.60 percent and they have between 1980 and 1990 decreased: from about 11.60 percent in 1980 to 9.00 percent in 1990.

There is not much change in the percentage of land owned by small peasants in the irrigated region. Small peasants owned about 23.50 percent in 1960; whereas in 1990 they held about 23.60 percent. This is an increase of about 0.10 percent.

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<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marginal Peasants</td>
<td>7.52</td>
<td>6.40</td>
<td>11.60</td>
<td>9.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Peasants</td>
<td>23.50</td>
<td>22.60</td>
<td>22.20</td>
<td>23.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Peasants</td>
<td>9.30</td>
<td>18.08</td>
<td>12.53</td>
<td>14.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rich Peasants</td>
<td>34.30</td>
<td>27.57</td>
<td>21.98</td>
<td>20.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Lords</td>
<td>25.38</td>
<td>25.35</td>
<td>32.69</td>
<td>32.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary survey by V. Anil Kumar

The middle peasants in the irrigated region have fared better than small and marginal peasants. In 1960 the middle peasants owned land of about 9.30 percent; in 1990 this has increased to 14 percent.

The rich peasants of the irrigated region however have shown a trend different from that of middle peasants. In 1960 the rich peasants held land of about 34.30 percent. In 1990 this has decreased to 20.50 percent. The landlords however have increased their land ownership between 1960 and 1990. They held about 25.38 percent in 1960. In 1990 this was about 32.90 percent. That means there is an increase in land ownership by landlords, particularly in the irrigated region. The situation becomes clearer when we look at the average size of the holding among the peasant classes.
4.3. AVERAGE SIZE OF THE HOLDING AMONG THE DIFFERENT SIZE CLASSES BETWEEN 1960-1990

(a) Semi-irrigated region

In the semi-irrigated region the average size of the holding of marginal peasants increased from 0.79 acres in 1960 to 1.00 acre in 1990. The average size of the small peasant holding in the semi-irrigated region was about 1.96 acres in 1960; which increased to 3.04 acres in 1990. The average holding of the middle peasant in the semi-irrigated region has seen an increase from about 4.33 acres in 1960 to 6.07 acres in 1990. The average holdings of the rich peasants and land lords have however seen a decline in the semi-irrigated area between 1960-1990. The average rich peasant holding has come down from 22.41 acres in 1960 to 12.05 acres in 1990.

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marginal Peasant</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Peasant</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>3.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Peasant</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>5.26</td>
<td>6.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rich Peasant</td>
<td>22.41</td>
<td>13.84</td>
<td>13.91</td>
<td>12.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Lord</td>
<td>41.66</td>
<td>35.00</td>
<td>29.00</td>
<td>30.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table-5

Average size of the holding among the different size classes between 1960-1990 (semi-irrigated region Somaram 50+Prajapalle 50 = 100 households)

Source: Primary survey by V. Anil Kumar

The average size of the holding of the landlords too decreased from 41.66 acres in 1960 to 30.5 acres in 1990. These trends are consistent with the trends discussed earlier.

(b) Irrigated region

The average size of the holding among the marginal peasants of the irrigated region has increased from 0.63 acres in 1960 to 0.65 acres in 1990. This increase is too small to call it an increase indeed.

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<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marginal Peasant</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Peasant</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>1.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Peasant</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>4.79</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>3.63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table-6

Average size of the holding among the different size classes between 1960-90 (irrigated region Yadpalle 50+Gudur 50=100 households)
Rich Peasant                      18.92  13.41  9.41  9.75  
Land Lord                         21.00  18.50 21.00  23.50  

Source: Primary survey by V. Anil Kumar

The average size of the holding among the small peasants has however seen a decline from about 1.94 acres in 1960 to 1.68 acres in 1990. The middle peasant holdings show a different trend in the irrigated region. The average size of holding among middle peasants was 2.79 acres in 1960 and it has increased to 3.63 acres in 1990. This surely is an indicator of increase in land ownership among middle peasants.
Rich peasant holdings in the irrigated region, according to the data we have, have in fact decreased. The decrease is from 18.92 acres in 1960 to 9.75 acres in 1990. This was drastic indeed. Interestingly the average size of the holding has not decreased among the landlords of the irrigated region. In fact it shows an increase from 21 acres in 1960 to 23.50 in 1990.

4.4. CLASS AND CASTE COMPOSITIONS IN THE SAMPLE IN THE SEMI-IRRIGATED AND IRRIGATED REGIONS

In order to arrive at class and caste composition of peasants we have divided peasant classes into three broad caste groupings. They are, firstly, the scheduled castes; secondly, the backward castes (in order to avoid confusion we have not used the term ‘backward classes’); and thirdly, other castes or ‘forward castes’ i.e., the upper castes. We present the data in tables that indicate the caste position of each class and vice versa. We have presented the presence or absence of each along the spectrum of aforementioned peasant classes. What follows is a discussion of the results of the tabulation.

(a) Semi-irrigated region

In the semi-irrigated region, among 33 marginal peasant households, 15 households belonged to scheduled castes and 18 households belonged to backward castes. There was no single other caste or upper caste household among the marginal peasants. Marginal peasant class totally consisted of scheduled castes and backward castes. Among the small peasant class house holds (out of a total 43 house holds) 6 belonged to scheduled castes, 29 belonged to backward caste grouping and 8 belonged to other castes or upper castes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Peasant Class</th>
<th></th>
<th>Scheduled Caste</th>
<th>Backward Caste (classes)</th>
<th>Other Castes (Forward Castes)</th>
<th>Total Household</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Househol ds</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Househol ds</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Househol ds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marginal Peasants</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>45.45</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>54.55</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13.95</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>67.45</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 8
Class/Caste composition in the sample in the irrigated region (No.s of HH)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Peasant Class</th>
<th>Scheduled Caste Households</th>
<th>Backward Caste (classes) Households</th>
<th>Other Castes (Forward Castes) Households</th>
<th>Total Households</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marginal Peasants</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Peasants</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Peasants</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rich Peasants</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Lords</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>14</strong></td>
<td><strong>76</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary survey by V. Anil Kumar

In the small peasant class of irrigated region (out of 40 sample house holds) 5 are in scheduled caste grouping and again a bulk, i.e., 34 of them are in the backward caste grouping; and there is only one small peasant house hold which belonged to the other or upper caste. In the middle peasant class in the irrigated region (out of 11 sample house
holds) none belongs to scheduled castes and 9 belonged to backward castes and 2 belong to other or upper castes.

In the rich peasant class in the irrigated region (out of 6 sample house holds none belong to scheduled castes and three, (i.e., exactly 50%) belong to backward castes and another 3 that is rest of the 50% belong to the other or upper castes. Among the landlord class house holds, all, (4 of the sample households) of them belong to the other or upper castes. The land lord class in this region is 100 percent upper caste.

4.5. DISCUSSION OF PRIMARY SURVEY RESULTS

In this section we discuss the trends in the Primary data presented above.

Firstly, we have taken a stratified Proportionate random sample for both the regions semi-irrigated and irrigated. The sample size was 200, 100 for two semi-irrigated villages and 100 for irrigated villages. We have used 1995-96 World Agricultural Census data as the base out of which the sample was prepared. Secondly, the sample is not randomly random and we have carefully followed the advice given by Ashok Rudra on survey method.

Thirdly, The trends in the secondary data pertaining to semi-irrigated region clearly indicate that the land owned and controlled by marginal, small and middle peasants has increased while that of the rich of the rich peasants and landlords has declined. The data we generated in the two semi-irrigated villages clearly coincides with the more anthropological account we have given of the same villages (Somaram and Prajapalle). The trends in Primary data which show that there is a deconcentration of land ownership in the semi-irrigated region are consistent with the account we have given of them in the case studies. The marginal, small and middle peasants who have improved their land ownership also consist of major chunk of backward and even scheduled castes. The tables on class-caste composition clearly bring out that the rich peasants and landlords whose land ownership has declined belong to upper castes. Here class and caste overlap. In the semi-irrigated, region those who have declined in land ownership over the period 1960-1990 not only belong to rich peasant and landlord classes but they also belong to upper castes.

Fourthly, in the irrigated region the trends brought out are mixed but the major contention we made in two case studies of Yadpalle and Gudur i.e., that there is a strengthening of landlords, is amply vindicated. The data pertaining to the irrigated region show that there is cent percent association between caste and class at the upper end of the class spectrum: i.e., vis-à-vis the landlords. But vis-à-vis the lower end of the class spectrum one finds a mix of scheduled as well as backward castes. But it is also true that the presence of upper castes among marginal peasants is zero. Thus trends in both regions vindicate and substantiate the claims made in the qualitative case studies.

One final word about the semi-irrigated region: The semi-irrigated region is statistically more important for Nalgonda than the other regions: irrigated and totally unirrigated. This probably explains that why in the secondary data discussed in the previous chapter (i.e., in the official statistics) the trends of deconcentration are so starkly prominent. It is the significant presence of the data of the large semi-irrigated region which gives the official land related statistics, in some probability, the trend of deconcentration in the entire district.
In this section we dwell upon the making of agricultural labour as a class in India. Firstly, we consider the views of economic historians and then the ongoing debate within the discipline of Indian politics. One broad point to be noted at the outset is that the development of capitalism can be studied both from above and below. This appears to be true both regarding industrial capitalism as well as agricultural capitalism. One can either study the development of capital, its origins or flow from above. Here we see the study of economic origins and social origins of the capital. The particular channels it takes etc. A good example of a study of this kind is the study by Carol Boyack Upadhya of the farmer-capitalists of Coastal Andhra.\(^45\) Another way of studying the development of capitalism is to study from below. That is the study of the formation of class of agrarian labour and the process of differentiation of peasantry over a period of time. This is done for example in the many studies of proletarianisation in the third world.\(^46\) This throws light on whether or not peasantry is differentiating; the socio-economic origins of the labour and its political organisation also become important objects of study. In the Indian context two economic historians directly addressed themselves to the latter question. They are Surendra J. Patel\(^47\) and Dharma Kumar.\(^48\) Before moving on to what political scientists have to say about the post-independence India we briefly discuss the views of economic historians.

Surendra J. Patel, in a study published in 1952, held that a class of agricultural labourers was created in India basically in the 19\(^{th}\) and early twentieth centuries, though with substantial diversity in the country. He holds basically the colonial state to be responsible for the creation of the class of agricultural labourers. According to Patel, prior to the late nineteenth century there might have been labourers but these were ‘no noticeably large class’.\(^49\) Patel holds that the swelling of agricultural labour ranks was owing to the ‘intra-group shifts’\(^50\) rather than owing to the simple growth of population:


\(^{47}\) Surendra J Patel., *Agricultural Labourers in Modern India and Pakistan*, (Bombay : Current Book House, 1952).


\(^{49}\) Surendra J Patel, *op.cit*-p32.

\(^{50}\) *Ibid.*, pp.18-19.
by ‘intra-group shifts’, Patel means the transformation of cultivators into agricultural labourers.

Surendra Patel gives a very graphic portrayal of the pre-nineteenth century agrarian society. It was ‘self contained’; and consisted of ‘self-sufficient’ and self-perpetuating units of village communities. The rural society was founded on the principle of reciprocal labour exchange. There was no class of labourers of whatever kind. A close unity existed between handicrafts and agriculture, which was disturbed in the late-nineteenth century and early twentieth century. Patel classifies the nineteenth century India into three categories: The Great North, the Southern region and the Eastern region. According to Patel in each region the process of proletarianisation went on differently and at different pace.

In the Southern region, he says, the process was the most acute. This area consisted of three British provinces Bombay, Madras as Central Provinces. According to Patel the proportion of agricultural labourers in 1931 was more than two-fifths of the total agricultural working population. In the Eastern region Bengal, Orissa and Bihar, the process went on, and was only second to the southern region. Here the proportion was between one-fifths and two-fifths. The process of creation of the labour class went on in the mildest manner in the Northern and Western region. Here according to Patel it was less painful as well. Here by 1931 the agricultural labour population was below one fifth of the total working population in agriculture.

Essentially, according to Patel, two processes were responsible for the proletarianisation. Firstly, the handicrafts and artisans were deindustralised by the penetration of industrial goods from Britain. Cheap industrial products demolished the markets for the home made goods. Secondly, the colonial rulers introduced systems of land settlements which in turn created agrarian structure, that lead to the creation of agricultural labour class. Patel further divides the agrarian structures into three types. The three types of settlements were introduced in the three regions. The zamindari system in the Eastern region, the raiyatwari system in the Southern region and the mahalwari system in the North and North Western region. Each had differential impact on the three regions. The worst impact being that of the zamindari and the raiyatwari systems. Under the zamindari system the independent cultivator became a tenant-at-will. And gradually even lost that position and become a labourer. Whereas in the raiyatwari system the peasant cultivator lost the land to either the state or money lender-usurer owing to the increasing cash revenues of the colonial state. Which indeed also forced the peasant-cultivator to take to commercialisation of agriculture, which in turn forced the peasant to quit with his patch of land in times of crisis. The crisis of the peasant under all the systems was basically pecuniary crisis. Patel divided the types of labourers into four basic types:

1) Bonded or semi-feudal labourers
2) Dwarf-holding-labourers of whom there are basically again
   (a) Tenants-at-will
   (b) Share croppers

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51 Ibid., pp.32-33.
52 Ibid., p.28.
53 Ibid., p.71.
3) Underemployed land less labourers
4) Full time free wage labourers

Though Patel tries to give many subtle distinctions only two types are broadly discernible from his work i.e. free and un-free labourers. While this is one view of the process of creation of agricultural labour there are two essential problems with the work of Patel. Firstly, it is a work essentially of the area under the British rule. That is the Presidency areas; what of the areas under the Princely states? What were the processes going on in those areas? Patel has no answer to this question. Secondly, Patel’s work gives scant or no attention to the processes of caste/class relations. In fact there is no mention of caste in Patel’s work. Patel’s work is an excellent example of the study of class formation, which is comparable to the best work on the third world. For example there are many parallels between Patel’s description of recruitment and the working conditions of plantation labour in the eastern region and those of the Latin American studies e.g.: C.D. Scott’s work being one of them.

When seen in comparative perspective the process of class formation in India was more complex than in other Third world countries. The colonial impact vis-à-vis class formation in many a country of third world was mostly in particular sectors: mines, plantations and/or such enclaves. Often violence, force and bloodshed were used by the colonial powers. In contrast, in India the British had to use a variety of systems for the sake of economic exploitation, of which less violent structural processes were more important, than say, indented labour and forced work, where overt violence, inhuman circumstances prevailed. Thus most of Patel’s description is understandably devoted to the gradual processes of dispossession under the three different land settlement systems. The discussion of plantations takes place but only marginally.

For all his data Patel depends to a large extent on the governmental census only. There is little data that is taken out of any independent studies. Patel shows a very high degree of care in dealing with the data. As we will see this dependence on colonial data is much more in the case of the study by Dharma Kumar. The essential point is not either about the data or the methodology of Patel. It is about Patel’s Contention.

Surendra Patel’s central contention is that there was no noticeable or significant class of agricultural labourers in India before nineteenth century. He claims that harmonious rural communities without significant class or caste contradictions existed prior to the nineteenth century. And according to Patel the class of agricultural labourers is a colonial creation. That it is the British who are responsible for today’s presence of a large class of agricultural labourers. Though a treatise in economic history, is Patel’s thesis useful from political science point of view? Researcher believes yes, it is. Because one, the work upholds the role of the state in creating societal structures and classes. Two, creation of classes is as much political as it is an economic process.

Dharma Kumar in her *Land and Caste in South India* discounts the argument of Surendra Patel that a class of agricultural labourers was created specifically in the nineteenth

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century by the British. Taking the case of Madras Presidency she weaves a much more dense and complex argument. Dharma Kumar says that a class of agricultural labourers existed much before the coming of the British.\textsuperscript{56} According to her various forms of agricultural labour prevailed in South India ranging from free wage labour to absolute and complete slavery. Agrestic slavery and serfdom were integral features of the pre-British South India.\textsuperscript{57} She notes that particularly in South Malabar, South Canara and Tanjore slavery was quite prominent. And in other parts of Madras Presidency, relations varied in degree from slavery to free labour. But Kumar adds that the Indian variant of slavery differed from that of the Western or European one in two respects: one, the Indian variant was based on the caste system; where the most depressed and untouchable castes were under serfdom; two, in Indian case the slave and serf had subsistence rights. Certain kind of ‘moral economy’ that James Scott talks of prevailed.\textsuperscript{58}

Dharma Kumar’s basic argument is that the Indian social structure was as much to blame for the existence of agricultural labour as a class as were the British. The upper landed castes ensured the supply of labour through the basic system of caste. Often the untouchable castes were the slaves. She even argues that the price of a slave varied according to his caste status. Thus caste played a central role in perpetuating the system of agrarian servitude. According to Kumar even population growth played some role in the swelling of the ranks of the labour class. All in all Dharma Kumar says that to think that idyllic, self contained, self sufficient rural communities existed before the advent of the British is incorrect.\textsuperscript{59} Now we turn to the political scientists who have addressed themselves to the process of class formation. Relatively only few political scientists have shown interest in agrarian class formation. Interestingly non-Marxist political scientists showed more curiosity about the class formation process in post independence agricultural Indian than Marxists. Marxists political science often takes differentiation among peasantry and contradictions as given. Most prominent among the non-Marxists political scientists who took interest in the process being the American Political scientist Francine Frankel.\textsuperscript{60} After Frankel almost every American political scientist working on India has addressed him or her self to the questions raised by Frankel.

Francine Frankel firstly showed interest not or the historical aspect of the class formation. But she indirectly addressed to the question while dealing with the specific problem of the consequences of the green revolution. Frankel’s work, it might be noted at the outset, was an ahistorical one. As such, though it is an important contribution, Frankel does not debate about the origins of the working class. For example Frankel does not show much

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{56} Dharma Kumar, \textit{op.cit.}, p.31.
  \item \textsuperscript{57} \textit{Ibid}, p.190-191.
  \item \textsuperscript{58} James. C. Scott. \textit{Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in South East Asia} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976).
  \item \textsuperscript{59} Dharma Kumar, \textit{op.cit.}, p.193.
\end{itemize}
concern as to the process of differentiation in class or caste terms prior to the green revolution period. In that sense Frankel’s work is ahistorical. Frankel in her book *India’s Green Revolution: Economic Gains and Political Costs*, basically contends that owing to uneven distribution of benefits of green revolution a clear cut polarisation of classes is taking place. Frankel argues that while productivity had increased and agricultural economic growth took place this was being attained at the expense of political and social status quo. That the lower classes/castes are now realising the possibilities of growth and economic betterment provided the assets. This is leading to rural unrest. The monetisation of the rural economy, decline of patron-client relations are also the main reasons behind the decline of traditional order and the emergence of class-consciousness.\(^{61}\)

Frankel taking five sample districts of green revolution affected areas even argued that the growing disparities of the classes are leading to violent conflagrations. Increase in rural unrest, Frankel holds, is the direct consequence of the growth of class consciousness on the part of the working classes. Frankel notes increasing clashes particularly between agricultural labourers and the landed upper caste gentry. This according to her can become a regular phenomenon of the Indian countryside in the post green revolution period.\(^{62}\)

Francine Frankel’s work is exemplary in demonstrating how state policies affect social structure and shape the process of class formation. Green revolution is a consciously state created process in particular regions and with particular means—new HYV seeds, fertilisers etc. In that sense the origins of the entire green revolution process are political. Frankel not only reported the situation but even predicted that future will consist more of the same conflict. Many succeeding political scientists tried to grapple with the prediction. Of these the most prominent are (whom we will consider in greater detail) Lloyd Rudolph; Sussanne Rudolph and Paul Brass.

Rudolphs in their book *In Pursuit of Lakshmi: The Political Economy of the Indian State*,\(^{63}\) devote a special section to the question of polarisation of the classes in agricultural sector. Entitled ‘The Polarisation Thesis and its Alternatives’ the section argues that there is no definite trend towards polarisation in Indian rural political economy and politics. On the contrary they envisage a middle peasant class namely the ‘bullock capitalists’ gaining ascendancy. Thus they hold that the future of agrarian conflict is more about sectoral claims than about class interests.\(^{64}\) This sectoral politics articulated in the form of demands for more remunerative price, loan waivers etc., are said to be contributing towards the overall centrist politics in India. Rudolphs main contention is also that even where polarisation is taking place there is no guarantee that class politics will follow. That is the objective determinants need not translate into subjective political action. They argue that the objective circumstances are

\(^{61}\) *Ibid.*, pp.116-8, 197-8


only necessary conditions but not sufficient conditions for class action to follow. The sufficient conditions being leadership, ideology and political vision. Rudolphs do not hold that there is no differentiation among peasantry. They divide agricultural population into four classes: the large land owners, bullock capitalists, small holders and the landless labourers. But they hold that because of the growing economic and political importance of the ‘bullock capitalists’ what results is sectoral politics. Which they also call as the ‘new agrarianism’; the ‘new agrarianism’ has two distinct features: it is sectoral and it is centrist.

Paul Brass in his book, *The Politics of India since Independence* totally discounts the argument that green revolution led to polarisation of agrarian classes generating rural violence. After reviewing the post independence protest movements Brass holds that ‘there has been no major movement anywhere in India since the Green Revolution for which even a prima facie case can be made that it arose as consequence of technological change in agriculture’; and this does not mean that there were no isolated incidents of violence. Brass agrees that incidents such as Kilvenmani massacre do take place. But they are insignificant. Brass holds that backward areas unaffected by green revolution seen more conflicts: ‘The Conflicts are greatest not in Green revolution areas, but in the more backward areas and the struggles are over wages not over land’. According to Brass it is the extraordinary stability of the countryside, which needs explanation. Brass holds ‘Finally, it follows the fundamental change in the agrarian order is not likely to come in the form of mass revolutionary action from below’.

As discussed above important political scientists addressed themselves to the polarisation thesis firstly pronounced by Francine Frankel. While Rudolphs favour a ‘middle peasant thesis’ (bullock capitalists). Brass recognises the persisting class antagonism but discounts the argument that it will lead to class war.

### 5.1. Two Processes of Class Formation

Class formation can be divided into two processes: one, the structural process of coming into existence of class-in-itself; two, the coming into class-for-itself that is the acquisition of class-consciousness. Both are facets of class formation. The economic historians Surendra Patel, Dharma Kumar discuss the economical-structural process of the coming into existence of the class of agricultural labourers. While the political scientists discuss more explicitly the process of class formation in terms of acquisition of class-consciousness. Here there is difference between Francine Frankel and the other political scientists. Frankel discusses both the economic process of creation of agricultural labour class as

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well as the acquisition of political consciousness by them. Whereas the other political scientists Rudolphs, Paul Brass and also Myron Weiner,\(^{70}\) take the economically, structurally, formed classes as granted and discuss their politics. In this sense they each make their own analysis. Rudolphs emphasise centrist, sectoral politics like that of Shetkari Sanghatana and Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU). While Paul Brass considers in elaborate manner the objective conditions of class antagonisms but dismisses any possibility of class conflict in the Indian countryside.

It is precisely because the questions of class formation are addressed at political plane that the questions of class alliances and the questions of hegemony of one class over the other come into fore. And this then is linked to the party politics and electoral behaviour of the classes. But this also forms the limitation of conventional political scientific analysis. Because under capitalist development class differentiation and formation as structural processes keep going on as historical processes and the objective situation of class/caste configurations keep changing. Either the polarisation concentration tendency argued by Marxists (and later by Francine Frankel) takes place or the deconcentration and levelling tendencies take place. Meanwhile state involvement playing a crucial mediating role. In whichever case talking about the ‘politics of the agrarian sector’ without considering agrarian transformation in an integral manner-i.e.,

\begin{itemize}
\item[a)] the consideration of the structural/economic transformation,
\item[b)] the political formation of classes, or their non-formation, and
\item[c)] the process of state intervention.
\end{itemize}

Unless these three aspects are taken in their dynamic interaction the understanding of the sectoral politics remains incomplete. And this requires a deeper sense of understanding of the analysis of other disciplines if not altogether an interdisciplinary approach.

Thus political scientists and political economists\(^{71}\) seriously debate the issue of class formation in Indian agriculture. As is also clear from the above there is no unanimity of opinion on the polarisation thesis. Later theorists, particularly American political scientists more rejected the thesis than accepted it. But in the discipline of Indian politics it continues to be a central issue. Whether rejecting or accepting the thesis, all the political scientists and political economists agree on one point i.e., there is a marked regional dimension to the issue and the micro studies are necessary before blanket judgements are made. More empirical detail is looked for. The present work attempts to conduct such a much-needed empirical inquiry. After this brief review of scholarly views on the agrarian scenario what follows are the case studies of the five villages of Nalgonda district in Andhra Pradesh.


Chapter 6
EMERGENCE OF BACKWARD CASTES:
STRUCTURAL CHANGE AND GRASSROOTS POLITICS

CASE STUDY-I : SOMARAM

Presented in this chapter are two case studies from Ramannapet Mandal of Nalgonda district, Andhra Pradesh. In case study – I, we deal with Somaram village. In case study – II, (Presented in subsection VI.a) we deal with Prajapally village. Subsection VI.b is a summary of the findings of the two case studies. The summary also attempts to situate the case studies within the framework of the study and offers generalisations for the region Ramannapet. Ramannapet mandal falls in the second category of sub regions of Nalgonda district discussed in the introduction. This region is described as ‘developing region’ of Nalgonda district according to the criterion of irrigation.

6.1. Introduction

In this micro village study it is argued that over the years between 1960-90 a shift took place in the social basis of political power from upper castes to backward castes. It is argued that state intervention played an important role in this, not by way of any drastic economic programme, such as land reforms, but by way of holding periodic Panchayati Raj elections with electoral reservations for backward castes (B.Cs). It is the contention in this section that underlying the shift of political power from upper castes (mainly Reddys) to B.Cs. was a structural change in economic power i.e., part of this change involved change in some land ownership as well. It is argued that incorporation of village political economy into the world market played a key role in this process. It is further argued that even among the B.Cs, it is only a small upper crust which usurped political power over the years making use of the party system. While large majority of lower class B.Cs, continue not only to be powerless but are dominated by their own fellow caste members. Thus empirical research shows complex and interesting dynamics of caste/class relations while it also exhibits interesting impact of the three features, state intervention, commercialisation and politics from below. It is argued that though this is a micro study it is representative of the larger process of rural transformation taking place in the region.

For making the study more illuminating a periodization was adopted. This is as follows, Feudal-Nizam period (1900-1950); semi-feudal period of Reddy domination (1950-1975); transition to capitalistic mode of production and power (1975-1995) coinciding with the emergence of B.Cs. (Weavers).

6.2. Historical Background

The village Somaram was a Jagir village by 1900. It was under the jagir of a Muslim. The jagirdar was known by the name Gulum Mohammad Khan. The Nizam granted this village Somaram and a near by village, namely Nirmemala to Gulum Mohammad Khan for reasons not specifically known. From circa 1900 onwards to 1950 i.e., till the end of the Nizam’s rule the village was under the I control of Gulum ohammad Khan. Gulum
Mohammed Khan never lived in the village along with his family. He lived in Hyderabad. But his control of the village was total. He had the right to the entire land revenue collected from his two villages and besides Gulam Mohammed Khan was entitled to own substantial amount of the land of the two villages. These lands were cultivated through the system of Vetti or free labour. Before moving on to more details about the period of Gulam Mohammed Khan (1900-1950) a brief note on the productive forces appears to be necessary.

Somaram has 1500 acres of land, of which irrigated land is about 400 acres. It is all well-irrigated. During droughts irrigated area goes down to 100 acres only. The lands of Somaram village belong essentially to red soils. Lands are not richly fertile so as to cultivate lucrative commercial crops. Added to it is the more important fact that the entire area does not inherit any ancient irrigation system. There are no canals. The village does not even have a tank. Whatever irrigation took place, and takes place now, is through rains or more importantly through wells. As it comes out through various oral historical accounts well irrigation always played a prominent part in the village economy, and continues to do so presently also.

The principal crops grown in the past, and to a large extent in the present, are paddy, groundnut, castor and millets. Of which groundnut and castor are basically commercial crops. Paddy, which is the most important of all crops grown acts as part-commercial and part-subsistence crop. It was basing on the data on the prominence of the other two commercial crops, castor and groundnut, that Barry Pavier claimed that Nalgonda district was already incorporated into the world market by the time of the Telangana armed struggle.

What is important to note is that during more than half a century rule the ruler showed no interest whatsoever in the development of the village productive forces. Gulam Mohammed Khan and his ancestors were primarily interested in the land revenue and the product from their personally owned lands. They kept the entire village largely to the vicissitudes of nature. Chronic drought, at times near famine conditions, prevailed. Failure of crops and inability to remit land revenue in time, were usual features of the condition of the large section of the villagers. This as we see below led to the evolution and shaping of the agrarian structure in the village in the succeeding period.

As the Dora (landlord) of the village Gulam Mohammed Khan performed three functions: (a) collection of the land revenue, (b) collection of various taxes and (c) general village administration. This included law and order administration. As an absentee landlord and according to the administrative system of the Nizam rule, i.e., the vatandari system, Gulam Mohammad Khan appointed, on hereditary basis, three village officers. He ruled through these village officers. They were the patwari (or a BrahminKarnam), a Mali patel (Reddy), and a police patel (Reddy): This was the triumvirate which helped Gulam Mohammed Khan rule from about 1900 to the end of Muslim rule, circa 1950.

It is precisely during these fifty odd years that a single Reddy family accumulated land about a thousand acres; its members acting as the village officers of Gulam Mohammed Khan. The Patwari or Karnam -a Brahmin acting as the revenue officer- accumulated land about 200 acres. The method was often simple. Whenever a peasant could not pay the land revenue owing to drought, or some other misfortune, that land was transferred, in

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the records, into the account of either of the village officers. Oral historical accounts inform us that often exorbitant taxes of the Dora were also the reason why land shifted into the lands of the Patels. The Reddy patels used to pay the Dora the taxes of those who could not pay and transfer the land into their account. Thus one family of Reddys acting as village officers accumulated land around thousand acres which was later partitioned among five brothers.

Caste was no hindrance to this process. Often the dominant fellow caste members were also victims. But it was mostly the other backward castes and untouchable castes who bore this burden. As is well known through any study of Telengana of this period the domination of the patels (and the Doras) was not just economic, but was also social and political. Land ownership operated as objective basis for socio-economic and political oppression.

The other prominent castes of Somaram village: the Padmashalis (weavers) the toddy tappers, the yadavas (in that respective order) were prominent neither economically nor politically during this period. As is well known the system of free service – vetti - to the local lords i.e., the Patels engrossed all. But one must take caution to add here that even during this period the Padmashalis (weavers) were relatively free from its effects. Numerically predominant in the village as they were, weavers retained some relative autonomy from the system of oppression. But however left to themselves they were, they did not posses any land whatsoever. Nor could they make much fortune out of their caste occupation. Not at least during this period. As we will argue in the following it is a later phenomenon.

The end of the dominance of Gulam Mohammad Khan happened owing to two well known reasons; one, owing to the larger political struggle of the Telangana movement; two, owing to the abolition of Zamindari by the central government. But Gulam Mohammed Khan did not relinquish his landed interests easily. Whatever was left by him was taken over by his erstwhile village officers. And struggle, squirmishes, took place between (Nizam’s) the Dora’s men, the Razaakars - and local patels. In the squirmishes one Patel was shot dead by the Razaakars. Eventually the struggle ended in favour of the local Reddy Patels, particularly one family of Reddys. And the influence of the pateldom continued. Land continued to be concentrated in the hands of five Reddy families, around two hundred acres each by five brothers. They maintaining their hegemony and mobilising the solidarity of the fellow caste members continued to dominate the village affairs. This however needs a restatement.

Reddys in Somaram village were a differentiated lot. Not all Reddy patels were big landlords. By 1950 more than fifty percent of the Reddys owned landholdings less than twenty five acres. And often the land they owned had very less productivity. The absolute productivities of even big landholdings were dismal. It may be remembered here that in pre-green revolution period no Borlaug-packages were available. But what is important to note is that neither class differentiation nor low level of absolute standards of living affected (or prevented) caste solidarity from forming. Nor did it affect the overall nature of semi-feudal relations. Considerable number of Reddy families were self-cultivating i.e., then men, women and the children worked on the farms, but when it came to social relations with the other, lower caste families they were certainly discriminatory or semi-feudal. There was a strong element of dominance at the super structural level even when it did not exist at the economic level.
Table-9: Land Ownership Pattern in Somaram Village

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Land owned by</th>
<th>No. of Holdings</th>
<th>Total Land Under the Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Backward Class/Caste</td>
<td>-75-</td>
<td>350 Acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small peasant (Less Than 5 acres of Holdings in 1985)</td>
<td>12-</td>
<td>250 Acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total holdings between Twenty-Fifty acres in 1995</td>
<td>-2-</td>
<td>110 Acres</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Village Revenue (Pahani) Records.

6.3. From 1950-1975: The Pateldom

The period between 1950 to 1975 can safely be interpreted as a period of semi-feudal domination because the social relations were characterised by the domination of Rampala Reddy family. It was a period of the continuance of the traditional patron-client relations. Though the Dora Gulam Mohammed Khan was dispensed with, the patels continued to reign the village. In this the mobilization of caste solidarity was quite important. The first Gram Panchayat elections were held, after the formation of Andhra Pradesh State in 1959. In these elections in Somaram village the dominant Reddy family vigorously participated; and Rampala Ram Reddy was elected as Sarpanch of the village. Rampala Ram Reddy continued in the post of village sarpanch for another term as well. Thus the single Rampala family continued to dominate, de jure from 1959 to 1970. And de facto till roughly around 1975. In this period and till today, the Rampala Reddy family was, and is, associated with the Congress Party.

The productive forces of the village were not much developed during this period. The land was concentrated in the hands of Patel Reddy families. And the nature of productive
forces supported this social structure. We can take irrigation for example. The entire village depended to a large extent on well irrigation. This means that in a period during which there was no electricity, it was the big landowners who took advantage of whatever technology that was available. The diesel oil engines, which were used to pump water out, were within the reach of big landholders only. Family farms and dwarf holders certainly could not afford oil engines. The small peasants had to rely on what were called \textit{mota bavulu}; i.e., wells with a primitive technology of water pumping wherein oxen were used to pump water out of the well. It was all manual.

The state intervention to augment productive forces was also little or nothing. There was no electricity. Electricity came to the village in 1982. Till then the village was literally in darkness. State intervention even in other rural development programmes was minimal during this period. The Gram Panchayat sarpanches wielded political power, often backed by social domination, but they lacked public/governmental funds of any kind.

During this period the Rampala Reddy families basically wielded political power. They were the headmen of the village. As headmen they arbitrated the village affairs and quite importantly, the village disputes. Besides this they managed their own substantially big farms through, what appears to be, semi-feudal labour relations. \textit{Vetti} of the untouchable castes in particular seems to have continued, in however feeble form, till 1970. Not much thereafter.

Backward castes/classes in the village, though numerically preponderant, were not politically assertive during 1959 to 1970. Firstly, they were divided along caste lines. Secondly, the socially dominant and numerically important among them, the weavers, lacked economic power. During this period the weavers were only weaving cotton/handloom cloth for the local market. And this weaving for local market was not much lucrative. The handloom industry was not yet incorporated into the world market. As we see below this is a later development. In the following we will show that the globalisation of handloom industry led to the creation of a class structure among the weavers which in turn led to their political assertion. Thus this caste-occupation weaving, and the changes in that occupation, led to interesting repercussions for the grassroots politics.

But we should hasten to add here that the assertion of the backward castes took place much before the political ascendance of the weaving caste. The political assertion of the backward castes occurred basically against the Reddys.

**6.4. Emergence of the Backward Castes 1975-1995**

The First Sarpanch Rampala Ram Reddy worked from 1959-1970. The \textit{de-facto} domination of the Rampala Reddy family continued till 1975. But the emergence of Backward Castes took place prior to 1975. In 1970 Panchayathi Raj elections all the Backward castes worked against the Vatandari Rampala Reddys. The village was polarised between the \textit{ex-Vatandari} Patels i.e., Rampala Reddy families and Backward Castes. In this the lower class self-cultivating Reddys also were united with the Backward Castes. A todday tapper Govuru Sudhakar was elected as Sarpanch and the continued in the post till 1981.
The weavers in the village were a numerous and politically important backward caste. But they were united against Vatandari Reddys with the toddy tapper Govuru Sudhakar. Weaving as an occupation till 1980 was only meant for local market. The raw materials yarn, chemicals, etc., used to be brought from Hyderabad and finished cloth used to be again marketed back in Hyderabad. During the tenure of Sudhakar the most significant achievement was village electrification. This meant that even small peasants could buy a pump set and electrify their wells. Which, in turn, meant that the backward class small peasants could strengthen their family farms. Other minor developments such as constructing approach roads were also undertaken, particularly during the Janatha Party regime at the centre, under food-for-work programme. Interestingly during this period, from 1975 till as late as 1988, the Party configurations did not change much. Both the Vatandari Rampala Reddys and the Backward caste leaders fought against each other from different factions of the same Congress Party. The weaver caste, which independently asserted itself in politics later, was also under the hegemony of the Congress Party.

6.5. Incorporation of Weaving into the World Market

By 1980 the caste occupation weaving changed into a lucrative occupation. The local weavers started exporting their cloth to metropolitan cities such as Bombay, Delhi and Madras. The premium quality cotton cloth they produced was being exported from these metropolitan cities to continents as far as America, Europe and Eurasia. Some cloth was also exported to Asian markets such as Japan. Along with cotton cloth of high quality they also produce silk cloth and sarees for the wealthy of the national market. This process of internationalization was complex, and we will argue, has produced a class structure among the weavers. This is at first reflected in the emergence of master weavers and then to a stratification among the weavers. Firstly the enterprising among the weavers started bringing in the raw materials and distributing among the middle-working weavers. The middle working weaver in his turn employed a worker-weaver from any labouring-caste of the village.

I) Master Weaver – (Distributes raw material and markets the finished cloth).

II) Middle-Working-Weaver – (Applies colours, dye, etc., and hires labour).

III) Wage-Worker-Weaver – (Weaves the cloth on either daily wage basis or piece rate basis).

Figure 10. The class structure among the weavers

This above described structure among weavers worked, and still works in favour of the first category of master-weavers. The second and third category of weavers do not get more than their daily wage. Which in turn fluctuates with the fluctuating prices of the finished cloth in the world market. What the above process produced between 1980 to
roughly about 1990 is an affluent master-weaver class which also started asserting its dominance over not only the weaver caste, but over all the backward castes. The affluence of the master weavers is visible in their houses. They own D.C.M. -Toyota trucks, scooters, refrigerators, air coolers, etc., and a phone is also to be found in the house of every master weaver, which facilitates his communications with the local and metropolitan businessmen. It should be said that in contrast to this none of the consumer durables are to be found either in Reddys caste houses or in the houses of lower class weavers.

More importantly the master weavers started investing their money into buying the lands, mainly from the Reddys and some times also from other backwards castes. Thus one master weaver who combines his Government job with his master weaving activity has accumulated land of more than 100 acres.

The deconcentration of land among the dominant Reddy families appears to have taken place owing to two important reasons: one, land partition among family members; two, increasing cash dowries during marriages. Dowries in Reddy caste often run into lakhs of Rupees. This is one important reason for the sale of lands by Reddys; and the master weavers took advantage of the above said factors.

The weavers of the village are also organised into a co-operative society. Elections do take place for the society. But master weavers dominate the entire society. During the elections for the cooperative society the master weavers to win the co-operative society elections, lavishly use money, liquor, etc.. The master weavers literally invest in these elections and in turn later use the co-operative society for furthering their business interests. In these elections weavers do fight among themselves on party basis. The master weavers were united earlier under Congress party and presently they are under Telugu Desham Party. They shifted their loyalties recently.

Though the weavers are class divided, when it comes to Panchayati Raj elections, they mobilize caste solidarity for electoral purpose. But even during the elections it is the handful of master weavers who dominate their fellow caste members. Since master-weavers are engaged in the circulation of raw materials and marketing the finished product, they enter into patron-client relations with the other lower class weavers. These patron-client relations help them in mobilising the caste solidarity. Thus on its face it appears as if all the weavers belong to the same class and represent the same interests; but in actual reality they are differentiated and contain inter-class exploitative relations.

In 1981 elections the master weavers asserted their political power and one B. Damodar won the election replacing the earlier (toddy tapper) Sarpanch Govuru Sudhakar. This time the master weaver B. Damodar got elected as Sarpanch on Congress Ticket defeating Govuru Sudhakar who also was a backward Caste (toddy tapper) candidate belonging to the rival faction of Congress Party. It is clear that by this time though the Vatandari Rampala Reddys in the Village were supporting Congress party they were nowhere in the political scenario of the village. Certainly a decisive shift took place in the social basis of political power from Reddys to that of backward castes; and within the backward castes in favour of the master-weavers.

In 1988 Gram Panchayat Elections the earlier Sarpanch and master-weaver B. Damodar changed over to Telugu Desham Party and mobilised his caste as well. Thus the anti-Reddy feeling has also turned into anti-Congress politics. One can see the photographs of Congress leaders hanging on the walls in the houses of Rampala Reddy family but not
in the houses of any backward caste villagers. Thus presently the backward castes are organised under the handful of master weavers supporting the Telugu Desham party.

6.6. Politics from Below

A few members of the weaver caste who were working in the textile mills of Bombay got in touch with the trade union movement (CITU). These members tried to bring C.P.I.(M) into the Village. After coming from Bombay they started organising the wage labourers and the weaver-wage labourers under C.P.I.(M) but initially they were faced with stiff resistance from the master-weavers. The men belonging to the master-weavers burnt the party flags of the C.P.I(M) (presently a case is running in the local Court on this issue). Thus the backward caste master weavers who enriched themselves between 1980-1990 continue to dominate the village affairs. Presently they are also land lords along with the traditional Rampala Vatandari Reddy families. The attitude of the regional C.P.I. and C.P.I.(M) leaders towards the overall situation is marked by apathy and indifference. They are much active only during the elections.
Map No.2: Ramannapet Mandal

6.7. Impact of Liberalisation

For weaving occupation things have changed since roughly about 1990. The yarn, chemicals and other raw materials’ prices have doubled, while the price of the cloth exported has remain unchanged. The burden of the above said market fluctuations is transferred by the master weavers towards the two lower rungs of weavers. This is done by cutting down the wage rates and/or piece rates. Thus it is the wage workers who bear the burden of internationalisation.

Not only weaving business and agriculture the master weavers also indulge in money lending. Thus the money made out of weaving-trade, agriculture, money lending is now being invested in urban properties. For example a master weaver and earlier Sarpanch B.
Damodar has properties in Hyderabad and has his son studying engineering in the U.S.A. Thus over the years between 1970 to 1990 the backward castes have thoroughly consolidated their position economically and politically. Though the caveat is necessary here that there is a clear cut class structure among the backward castes.

6.8 Caste or Class?

As mentioned in the introduction in this study it is observed that a shift took place in the social basis of political power from upper castes to backward castes. But this shift took place only between the top layer of Reddys to the top layer or upper class backward castes. State intervention was only by way of a neutral by-stander or an umpire during the Gram Panchayat elections. No decisive economic programme, such as land reforms, has been carried out by the state. The changes in the agrarian structure have come about basically owing to the commercialisation process on one hand and one the other owing to the incorporation of the village political economy into the world market. The social relations have definitely changed from semi-feudal towards more capitalist nature. Vetti or such practices are totally absent now. The traditional Vatandari Reddy families have declined in political and social importance. Though they still hold some economic power.

Of the Three processes (a) state intervention, (b) commercialisation and (c) political movements from below-in this area, it is commercialisation which effected the agrarian structure most, caste occupations and their globalisation playing crucial role in the over all transformation process.

CASE STUDY-II: PRAJA PALLY

6.a.1. Introduction

In this micro village study also it is found that over the years between 1960 to 1990 a shift took place in the social basis of political power from upper castes to Backward castes. It is also found that state intervention played an important role in this, not by way of any economic programme, such as land reforms (In fact the land distributed owing to land ceilings in this village is much less-half an acre-than in the other village study of the region). But state intervention was crucial in terms of holding periodic Panchayat Raj Elections with electoral reservations for Backward Castes. The same contention as earlier holds good for this study also that underlying the shift of political power from upper castes (mainly Brahmmins in this case) to B.Cs., was a structural change in some land ownership as well. Unlike in the earlier study the incorporation of village political economy into the world market was not of significant importance to this study. The village political economy is more agricultural. Though weaving is important to the village political economy it is meant for national market only and not for international market. For reasons of historical specificity it is difficult to argue here that political power shifted only into the hands of a minority of upper class B.Cs. Unlike in the earlier study in this village study it is found that political power is more dispersed making categorical generalizations as well as clear cut diachronic periodization difficult. But the
general argument that the emergence of backward castes is a phenomenon pertinent to the whole region is vindicated in this study as well. Though it is difficult, a rough periodisation can be adopted for this village also. This is as follows, the period of Brahmin domination (1900 to 1970). This period can be called with some qualifications a period of semi-feudal social relations. Transition to capitalistic mode of production and power-(1970 to 1995), coinciding with the political emergence of various backward castes. Particularly Padmashalis and yadavas.

6.a.2. Historical Background

The Village Prajapally was a Khalsa Village by 1900. As we discussed in the Chapter II ‘Historical background’ the Nizam’s agrarian system included three types of ruling systems : Jagirdari, Khalsa and Sarf-e-Khas systems. In this, like in Somaram village, the Jagirdari system meant that the Jagirdar owned much or all the land of the village. In Sarf-e-Khas system the entire land was owned directly by the Nizam’s family and the land revenue went to their personal expenditure. Unlike the above two, in Khalsa system, the land ownership rested with the villagers. It was much like the raiyatwari system of the Presidency areas under the British Raj. The significant difference with the other two land systems was that the villagers owned the land in their names and the land revenue went neither to any individual Jagirdar nor to the Nizam but it went to the treasury of the Nizam Government. Praja Pally belonged to the above said Khalsa system.

But the village administration in all three types of land systems was run through the Vatandari system. It meant a system of village officers who consisted of the Vatan ; these were the Patwari, the Mali patel and the Kotval or Police Patel. The Khalsa villages were also run through the Vatandari system and Praja Pally was no exception to this. Praja Pally by 1900 had Vatandari system. Under the system the Patwari or Village Revenue Officer post belonged to a Brahmin-Karanam on hereditary basis. The Mali patel and Police Patel posts belonged to a distant Reddy family. Owing to the physical distance the Reddy family could not manage its Mali Patel and Police Patel Vatans. Owing to this difficulty the distant Reddy family gave up its Vatans. The Mali Patel and Police Patel Vatans were then transferred by 1900 itself into the hands of local Yadavas or what they are called regionally, the Gollas. The Yadavas basic occupation is sheep grazing. But one family, the Meda family of yadavas, accepted the Vatans conferred upon them and therefore it is a peculiarity of this village that the backward caste yadavas were at the helm of the village affairs from 1900 itself. While the Brahmin-Karanam family ran the revenue matters, the other matters concerning the village administration were run by the Meda family of Yadavas. Thus in this village the backward caste leadership existed since previous 95 years. And it is not possible like in the case of Somaram village, to argue that the B.Cs., emerged in the village politics at a particular point of time after independence.

In order to run the village administration the yadavas educated themselves to some extent. But this is only true with the Meda family of yadavas. The rest of the yadavas continued to be illiterate and backward. Though the Mali Patel and Police Patel posts were held by the Yadavas it is the Brahmin-Karanam and his family which ran the show in the village politics from 1900 to as late as 1970. In this village there is no significant
evidence that the Vatandari families accumulated land during the Nizam period of our consideration 1900 to 1950. Two reasons appear to be important for this; firstly, ownership of the land existed in the name of the villagers. Secondly the Karanam Patwari was himself a progressive man who participated in the struggle against Nizam rule as a Congress Party worker under the over all united front umbrella of Andhra Maha Sabha. He even participated in armed struggle against the Nizam. Thus unlike in Somaram village the village officers did not resort to accumulation of lands or encroachments of lands. Another reason was also important for this i.e., the village productive forces. We turn to this aspect below.

The productive forces of Prajapally village are better situated than that of Somaram village. The village has 1200 acres of land. And has one big tank and four small tanks. Both tank irrigation and well irrigation played important role in somewhat stable and assured subsistence of small peasants. Thus the politically progressive nature of local elites and the over all nature of productive forces worked against the concentration of land in the hands of a few village officers. Thus in this village the agricultural scenario is characterised by the preponderance of the small peasants. Another important reason for the relative absence of much feudal or semi-feudal dominance is that the village Dora relinquished his Vatans i.e., Mali Patel and Police Patel posts to yadavas quite early i.e., around 1900. Therefore the village did not have dominant caste Dora. Though there were some Reddys in the village they were not the village officers and therefore their economic power was neutralised by the political power of the backward castes and therefore whatever upper caste domination was there in the village was that of the Brahmin-Karanam. But the progressive and politically active nature of this village officer also diluted the semi-feudal content of the social dominance. Thus the Brahmin-Karanam family has about 75 acres of land Brahmin-Karanam and his family continued to dominate partly, the village affairs from 1900 to 1970.
Structural Change in Land Ownership in the village Prajapally between 1960-1990.

Table 10: Land Ownership Pattern in Prajapally Village

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Land owned by</th>
<th>No. of Holdings</th>
<th>Total Land under the Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Backward Class/Caste Small Peasants (Less than 2 Acres of holdings in 1995)</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>150 Acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Backward Class/Caste Small peasants (Less than 5 Acres of holdings in 1995)</td>
<td>293</td>
<td>680 Acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total holdings between 20 to 35 Acres</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>450 Acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total holdings above 50 Acres in 1995</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Village Revenue (Pahani) Records


In the village Prajapally roughly from 1900 onwards the Khalsa system of land revenue prevailed. According to this system the ownership rights on the land belonged to the cultivators. The land was not owned either by the Dora as in Jagirdari system or by the Nizam as in Sarf-e-Khas system. Though there was vatandari system it was only meant for the collection of land revenue. The land revenue itself then went not only into the personal coffers of either the Dora or the Nizam but into the treasury of the Nizam state. This system had some repercussions for the shaping of village land ownership pattern. Though there was the triumvirate of village officers patwari, Malipatel and police patel – the khalsa system itself allowed less room for accumulation of the land by village officers. There was less arbitrariness in the land related accounts. This means that in the village Prajapally the possibilities of accumulation of land by village officers were much less than in the village Somaram. Added to it were the specificities of the village history i.e. the relinquishment of village vatans by the distant Reddy Dora in favour of local yadavas and the progressive nature of the local Brahmin patwari/Karnam.

It was difficult to obtain much detailed information about the period from 1900 to 1970 regarding the social relations or political dynamics. But one thing became clear that owing to the absence of the Dora from the village scene semi-feudal practices like the vetti were not prominent. The upper caste domination was also unnoticeable because of the fact that the two village officer posts were in the hands of local yadavas. In 1959 Panchayat elections a Brahmin/Karanam namely A. Venkata Rao was elected as Sarpanch. Again in 1964 elections another Brahim/Karanam was elected from the congress party. It should be noted that it is these people who participated in the Telengana armed struggle against the Nizam under the guise of united front organization: the Andhra Maha Sabha. So they carried the popularity of having fought against the Nizam. By the same token, as the interviews with them show they were also conscious of upper caste domination; particularly that of Reddy domination. It would not be correct to hold that the Reddy Doras were alone oppressive. In other villages the Brahmin and Velama Doras were also oppressive. But the main cause which ignited the Telengana armed struggle was Reddy oppression. Having been conscious of the causes and consequences
of the armed struggle the Brahmin/Karanams of the village Prajapally were more liberal in their nature.
Nevertheless, the Brahmin patwari and other Karanams continued to be on the top echelon of land ownership in the village; they owned more than 75 acres of land (the two families). But they cultivated this land through hired labour than through tenants. This land was later partitioned in both the families. Here it may be noted the Brahmin families *per se* were not oppressive in semi-feudal manner. But the period of their political dominance can be called semi-feudal in the sense that it is the traditional caste social hierarchy, which reflected, in the political power structure during their tenure as village Sarpanches. Land reforms have not made any difference to the situation as the land distributed from Brahmins to BCs was as less as 0.5 acres.

### 6.a.4. Political Emergence of the Backward Caste Peasantry

It is in 1970 that a break with the Brahmin dominance took place. In the 1970 Panchayat elections a yadava sarpanch was elected. This yadava sarpanch namely Meda Narasimha was related to, or rather came from, the Meda family of yadavas to whom belonged the Mali patel and police patel vatans. Though they belonged to the yadava community, which is predominantly illiterate, the Meda family of Yadavas learned reading and writing skills to enable them to function as Malipatel and Police Patels. Thus it is widely noted in the village that it is since 1970 that the Backward castes came to the forefront of the political power.

Yadavas’ or *Gollas*’ (as they are locally called) main caste occupation is sheep grazing. In this village they combine sheep grazing with agriculture. Most yadavas do own land and are small farmers or middle farmers. The village productive forces are much better suited for the sustainability of dwarf holdings than what it is the case with Somaram. The village has four small tanks and one big tank. Most Yadavas own their parcels of land under these tanks. (it is since 1980 that the four small tanks are used only as percolation tanks i.e., the water of the four small tanks is stored and not used directly with the idea that the stored water would percolate into the wells dug in the *ayacut* area of the tanks. Thus tanks are used to enhance ground water situation. Much like in Somaram to Prajapally also electricity came in early Eighties. Since then almost all backward caste small peasants have acquired electric motors and pump sets.

Yadavas are the most numerically preponderant backward caste in the village. They can be divided into middle peasants, small peasants and marginal peasants/agricultural labourers. The next most important backward caste in the village is the weaver-caste or the Padmashalis. A weaver in this village practice weaving occupation but it is qualitatively different front the village Somaram. We turn to this aspect below.

Apart from yadavas and weavers the third most important backward caste in the village is that of toddy tappers. Together these three castes form a political block in the village--deeply conscious of their political, economic, social backwardness and also conscious of their own numerical preponderance.

Weavers in the Prajapally village are basically subsistence weavers. They weave primarily for national market. Both cotton and silk cloth is produced here. Unlike in Somaram village there are no master-weavers. Weaving work is done by independent family units. And the cloth woven is supplied to the local cooperative society. The local
(village) cooperative society in turn markets the woven cloth through APCO (Andhra Pradesh Weaver’s Cooperative). Prajapally weavers produce both cotton cloth as well as silk sarees. Each silk saree, for instance, sold for about thousand or fifteen hundred rupees. It is precisely because there is no master-weavers phenomenon that there is little capital or land accumulation by weavers. In Somaram village the master-weavers phenomenon arose owing to the internationalisation of weaving activity. In contrast to this in Prajapally village weaving is essentially for national market. And the marketing of the finished cloth is done through a cooperative society of the weavers. Elections do take place for weavers cooperative society. But the candidates do no indulge in using money, liquor etc. for winning elections. The cooperative society chairperson is usually elected unanimously.

It must be made clear that here weavers are facing tough times since liberalization came about. Firstly, much like in Somaram village, in Prajapally also weavers face the situation of hike in the prices of raw materials and stagnation in the prices of finished cloth. Beside this the weavers in Prajapally also face competition from textile industry centered in and around Bombay. Often the weavers complain that what they produce in a week days of time the textile mill owner produces in a few hours. There is an unequal competition between textile mills and handlooms. Often the market operating in favour of the textile mills rather than the handlooms. Highly inefficient system of marketing by local cooperative and the APCO also aggravates the situation. The handloom weavers do not get their cash bills for the work they have done promptly from APCO and consequently from the local cooperative. And when they get that is only equivalent to the wages of the family.

It is for these reasons that Padmashalis (weavers) of Prajapally do not end up by becoming landlords as in Somaram. There is no internationalization of handlooms; no master weavers; no three tier structure of weaving; and no land accumulation.

6.a.5. Labour Relations in Prajapally

Presently the labour relations of Prajapally are of two kinds. They are casual labour and annual farm-servant labour. Casual wage labour is hired on day to day basis. Wages for casual labour are around fifteen rupees for women and thirty to forty rupees for men. By farm-servant labour we mean the Jeethas. In this case the wage labourer is hired on annual contract basis. The ongoing rate for annual contract is Rs 6000 to 7000 per year. Along with it the annual labourer is given loan of worth about Rs. 2000 on 2% per annum interest. Here the researcher could not find any debt bondage. Farm-servant labourers never work for an employer for more than one year; the labourer usually pays off his debt at the end of the agricultural year and enters into contract for another year with another master. Usually attached labourers hail from backward castes as well as from scheduled castes. Employers are either from upper castes, Brahmans and Reddys or from other backward castes.

Since 1980 labour is increasingly turning from work in the village to work in the nearby town. Everyday nearly sixty labourers travel to a neighbouring town Chityal to work as Hamali Coolies in the rice mills. According to the season in the rice mills they are supposed to be earning more than the daily wage in the village i.e., about Rs. 70 to 80 a day.

In Prajapally village as we have noted earlier backward castes emerged in Panchayat politics from 1970 onwards. They continue to hold on to village officer posts—Mali Patel and Kotwal posts—which were bestowed upon them as early as 1900. Land ownership is no more concentrated in the hands of upper castes. But holdings more than 25 acres—which is above the ceiling level imposed by government—continue to exist in the hands of Brahmin landlords. But when we compare this with the earlier period, i.e., before 1970, their holdings too have declined substantially (from about 75 acres to about 20-25 acres). Land changed first into the hands of weavers. Weavers at first bought lands from Brahmins. Later weavers sold their lands to other backward castes such as yadavas and toddy tappers. Now it is yadavas and toddy tappers who form the owners of majority of middle and small holdings and who also run the village politics—de jure and de facto.

6.a.7. Politics from Below

The politics from below started in the village when the small peasants and workers who travel to and work in the nearby town Chityal got organised under CPI(M). They brought CPI(M) to the village. This is from about 1980. But still they are not a prominent political force in the village. In Panchayat elections they score about 250 votes only. Mainly toddy tappers and Harijans are organised under CPI(M). They did little organisational or political work since last decade. They did not even attempt to raise agricultural wages. Therefore the impact of politics from below on the agrarian structure is marginal. It is commercialisation, which has had considerable impact on the agrarian structure.

Land values increased from about Rs. 400 per acre in 1960 to Rs. 25,000 to 30,000 per acre in 1990. In 1995 well-situated wet land sold even for about Rs. 45,000 to Rs. 50,000 per acre. Dry land now sells from about Rs. 25,000 to Rs. 30,000 per acre. Landlords declined because of partitioning of holdings, unmanageability and diversification of interests. Here no particular caste/class—such as master-weavers of Padmashali caste in Somaram—acquired the lands. In contrast to that the whole range of the backward castes benefited from the decline of big landlords—benefited in the sense, that they bought the lands of erstwhile big landlords and strengthened their small and marginal farms.

No significant phenomenon of transformation of big landlords into ‘capitalist landlords’ was observable in the village: primarily because no drastic change occurred in the past thirty years in the productive forces, or physical infrastructure of production. The advent of electricity and switch over to electric pump sets has benefited as much the small and marginal peasants as it does the somewhat big land owners.

SUMMARY: RAMANNAPEET MANDAL

6.b.1. The Emergence and Consolidation of Backward Caste Peasantry

We began the study with the hypothesis in the ‘introduction’ that over the period between 1960 to 1990, three factors: state intervention, commercialisation and political
movements from below have produced incomplete polarisation. We also contended that there is more de-concentration than concentration of land ownership. The hypothesis is confirmed in the two sample villages described above belonging to the Ramannapet Mandal of Nalgonda District.

As mentioned at the inception of the study Ramannapet Mandal belongs to the developing region of Nalgonda District with medium level of irrigation. Irrigation in this region is basically through motored wells and tanks of small size. In tracing the impact of three above said aspects a) State intervention; b) Commercialisation; and c) Political movements from below. We encountered some insurmountable practical problems. These are particularly regarding the state intervention in the agrarian structure.

We divided state economic intervention into two state policies:

i) Land reforms and
ii) Rural development programmes.

The official data on both the above said aspects was not available. The Mandal Revenue Office could not provide any data on land reforms for the entire mandal. Nor even for the villages studied. Consequently, the researcher had to depend on the data given by the Patwari or village Revenue officer on land reforms for the two villages, basing on village Revenue Records.

The situation regarding rural development programmes was worse. No data on rural development programmes implemented between 1960-1990 is stored either in the Mandal Development Office or in the District Level DRDA Office. In the DRDA Office Computers data is barely available from 1995. Therefore the data on state intervention in terms of rural development programmes could hardly be provided at any level.

It is rather surprising that while the state or governments of different parties boast of so much investment in rural development programmes they make no attempts to store information regarding the schemes and programmes they have implemented or attempted to implement. Therefore, this is a major unavoidable lacuna of the study that data regarding state intervention could not be provided. It caused much disappointment to the scholar.

Information on commercialisation of the village political economy came basically through researcher’s primary survey, field observation, and interviews. It is actually this aspect which affected the village political economy most. This aspect has also, as claimed in the case studies, contributed most to the change in the agrarian structure between 1960 and 1990. It is claimed that it is the commercialisation-and at times internationalisation-of village political economy which contributed to the process of transformation of semi-feudal social relations into more capitalistic social and labour relations. Change is more in kind and degree than what can be directly quantifiable. The change is qualitative. This happened in spite of absence of any drastic change in productive forces. There were some important changes such as electrification, which contributed to the strengthening of family farms and dwarf holdings. Besides commercialisation, other social reasons, such as family partitioning and hefty dowries during marriages also led to the dilution of the land concentration. And erstwhile landlords relatively declined.

Political movements from below in this area have not contributed much to the change in agrarian structure. Whatever political action has been observable in the area that has been that of the parliamentary left parties: CPI and CPI(M). And it has not affected the land
ownership pattern in anyway. They have also not succeeded in anyway in pressurising the state to implement better rural development programmes. They have been content all the while with getting their leaders elected for state assembly or parliament. Their politics have been strictly electoral and did not even contain much or any elements of trade unionism.

But it must be noted that the politics of left parties-CPI and CPI(M)-which took place largely in electoral alliance with the National Front Parties, for example the Telugu Desham Party (TDP), have contributed much to the process of political emergence of backward castes. We turn below to that.

The emergence of backward castes took place in nearly all the villages of the mandal roughly since 1970. Since then what has been taking place was their political consolidation. This process was two pronged. At political level the backward castes challenged the authority of upper castes-mainly Reddys; and succeeded to a large extent. At economic level also they contributed to the process of challenging semi-feudal practices. The practices such as Vetti have completely disappeared. Now almost entirely the labour relations are on the basis of free wage labour. The researcher could not find un-free labour or extra-economic coercion anywhere in the two village studies. Whose presence might have prompted him to call them anything other than capitalist. But that did not happen.

Commercialisation of the village political economy has also not led to the process of creation or emergence of ‘Capitalist Landlords’ who combine traditional caste power with modern economic power. Such phenomenon did not take place because of two reasons. Firstly there has been no drastic development of infrastructural facilities or productive forces-such as irrigation canals etc., Secondly there were other pressing social reasons such as heavy dowries during upper caste endogamous marriages and the processes of family partitioning. Because of these reasons what took place was a decline of landlords economically, socially and politically.

At political plane the periodic conducting of Panchayati Raj elections-of late with reservations for OBCs and women-have contributed much to the forming of caste solidarity among backward castes challenging upper castes. The emergence of backward castes was confirmed by the fact that in the June 1995 Gram Panchayat elections out of twenty villages in the Ramannapet mandal backward caste sarpanches were elected in 14 villages; Scheduled Caste Sarpanches were elected in five villages (together making it 19) and forward caste candidate won in only one village and that too was a village reserved for lady candidate in open general quota. Thus by 1995, nineteen out of twenty villages were under the political control of backward and Scheduled castes. This reflects two important aspects. Firstly, state intervention in terms of holding periodic Panchayati Raj elections along with reservations and secondly, lower castes emergence on their own. The process was partly state-induced and partly historical.It would be incorrect to attribute to the state all the credit for the above said process. Political awakening of backward castes on their own having been exposed to periodic elections was as important as was the inducement or catalytic role of the state in terms of reservations.

Finally was there proletarianization/polarisation process in field area? The answer is: no. The process observed was de-concentration of big land holdings and strengthening of small-middle holdings and thereby the backward caste peasants.
In the village Somaram the land changed hands from Rampala Reddy families into the hands of Padmashalis, particularly into the control of master weavers. Though there is substantive land concentration still in the village, it was not at the scale at which it existed till 1970. More importantly small and middle peasants were not dissolved and made into agricultural labourers. Owing to the export oriented, multi layered, handloom industry agricultural labour is diverted from agriculture into weaving activity.

In the village Prajapally the process of de-concentration is even more clear. The Brahmin landlords dispensed lands after family partition and later owing to unmanageability. The land shifted into the hands of backward castes: weavers, yadavas and toddy tappers. In this village the Vatandari power structure was already in the hands of yadavas and later they further strengthened their position. An instance of conspicuous process of proletarianisation was found in Prajapally where about sixty peasants travel each day to a neighbouring town Chityal to work as labourers in rice mills. All these own some land but work as labourers and for these the wage rates are better only in peak seasons. Barring this instance no process of polarisation within the village political economy was found during the study.

6.b.2. The Dilemma of the Semi-Feudal Class

The semi-feudal class consists of upper caste landlords in the region. We have stated earlier that in the field area they come from the Reddy and Brahmin castes. As stated earlier their economic, social and political importance has declined owing to the emergence of backward castes. But we have also noted that the state could not carry out thorough going land reforms and these semi-feudal classes still command some economic power; however declining it is. But why such decline? Why does economic growth not benefit these classes more than it does the other classes?

Political economists like Utsa Patnaik have argued that after green revolution the traditional semi-feudal landlords have become capitalist landlords. But we have noted that such a phenomenon did not take place in the field. In our observation the dilemma of the semi-feudal classes is that either they have to modernise and compete with the other emerging classes/castes (such as Padmashalis and yadavas in our case). Or, they have to decline before the pressures created by the larger polity, economy and society. This dilemma is acute for this class. In our field area the semi-feudal class started to decline

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73 Utsa Patnaik says “The capitalist path in India’s agriculture is one dominated by a socially narrowly based ‘landlord capitalism’ with the semi-feudal feature of caste domination of workers, which is capable of raising the level of productive forces only under certain exceptional conditions, and which acts as a long run fetter on agricultural growth and hence on the over all growth of the economy”. Utsa Patnaik, in Alice Thorner (ed). Op.cit. pp.50-51.

74 The term, ‘semi-feudal class’, is used here for describing upper-caste traditional landlords. The term holds as a true description for this class much in the same way the term “capitalist class” or “bourgeoisie” holds for the dominant class of capitalist mode of production. The dominant class of semi-feudal mode of production is semi-feudal class much in same the way for capitalist mode of production ‘capitalist class’ is.
because they could not modernise – by modernisation we mean modernisation of productive forces – and thereby strengthen their economic position. The state has also not strengthened the productive forces by improving the infrastructural facilities such as irrigation and canals. The physical conditions of economic production have not changed much since last thirty years. In these conditions the semi-feudal class neither could accumulate much capital nor could re-invest much capital. This is precisely the reason why the Reddy and Brahmin landlords could not become affluent capitalist landlords. This also explains why the phenomenon of capitalist landlordism is more pertinent to green revolution areas rather than non-green revolution areas. Here we may note that Utsa Patnaik draws her conclusions largely from studies done on green revolution areas.75 Thus the semi-feudal class in the study areas had either to modernise – which it could not – or decline. As noted earlier the social pressures within these castes, such as heavy dowries during marriages and pressures of family partitioning have contributed further to the decline of these classes/castes. The pressure to get the younger generation educated and placed in urban employment was added to this. Many landlords spoke to the researcher about the difficulty of getting their sons and daughters educated and employed with great anxiety; So did the youth belonging to the landlord families; for many of them have graduate or post graduate degrees but without any use.

But how do these landlords ensure their survival? How do they ensure their reproduction? Answer is two pronged. Firstly, they make use of whatever ‘free’ labour that is available. Secondly, they too make use of whatever advances have taken place in productive forces such as electric pump sets and tractors brought over from some distance. It is by both making use of the capitalistic labour relations as well as the modest advances in productive forces that the landlords of the erstwhile semi-feudal class ensure their reproduction.

Presented in this Chapter are two case studies from Miryalguda Mandal of Nalgonda district, Andhra Pradesh. In case study-III we deal with Yadpalle village. In case study-IV (Presented in subsection IV. a) we deal with Gudur village. Subsection VI. b is a summary of the findings of the two case studies. The summary also attempts to situate the case studies within the framework of the study and offers generalisations for the region Miryalguda.

CASE STUDY-III: YADPALLE

7.1. Introduction

Unlike in the earlier village studies in this village study it is argued that over the years between 1960-90 no dramatic shift took place in the social basis of political power. On the contrary it is found that the process of commercialisation which resulted from assured canal irrigation strengthened the position of the dominant caste/classes. It is argued that commercialisation process transformed the erstwhile semi-feudal landlords into modern capitalist-landlords. State intervention, besides not carrying out rigorous land reforms, was more in the direction of strengthening the dominant landowners by way of strengthening productive forces and in terms of loans and subsidies. In this study it is found that state intervention in terms of holding periodic Panchayati Raj elections, of late with electoral reservations for backward castes and women, has not had much significant impact on the village power structure though some awakening on the part of the backward castes recently began owing to the state-induced political change form above. In the following it is argued that the above said situation obtains because the landlord class quickly adapted itself to changed agro-economic situation, by modernising its productive forces. Thus it is argued that rapid commercialisation, emergence of capitalist-landlords and increasing problems that petty commodity production is facing are common features of this entire irrigated region.

The village history defies any comprehensive periodisation and only the advent of canal water in 1967 appears to be the watershed between 1960-90. But broadly keeping in view the changing nature of production relations we can divide the period of study into three phrases. A) 1960-67 : The pre-irrigation semi-feudal period; b) 1967-1980 : the post-irrigation semi-feudal period c) 1980-90 : the post-irrigation capitalist period. Any direct compartmentalisation of such periods is difficult and they considerably overlap. Above periodisation is made for analytical purposes only.

7.2. Historical Background

The village Yadpalle belonged to Diwani or Khalsa system of land tenure during the Nizam rule. As mentioned in the case study-II (of Prajapalle) the Dewani or Khalsa system resembled the Raiyatwari system of British Raj. Here the peasants owned land in
their names but they paid revenue to the Nizam government. It is not clearly known as to what was the agrarian structure of the village during the Nizam period. But oral accounts inform us two things. One, there was sufficient land concentration in the control of a handful families. Who were mainly Reddys. Two, these Reddys and the lower castes of the village owned allegiance to a distant Dora of a village, namely Babusahebpet. This village Babusahebpet is about 30 kilometres from Yadpalle village. Oral historical accounts inform us that the Reddy Deshmukh of Babusahebpet had lands-ranging from 50 to 300 acres-in nearly 60 villages. This Deshmukh also exacted Vetti from the service castes and scheduled castes on occasions such as marriages, deaths etc., Babusahebpet Deshmukh also had lands in Yadpalle of about 65 acres. But he as a Dora did not have his personal presence. This made some difference. In the absence of the Dora it was the local land owning families which held the control of the village affairs. The Patwari, Malipatel and Police Patel posts were in the hands of the Reddy families. Besides, during Nizam period, land ownership was also concentrated in the hands of Reddy families. It appears that between 1900 to as late a 1950 two Reddy families had holdings of about 400 and 250 acres each. Besides these, there were 11 Reddy families in the village with holdings larger than 100 acres.

There are two points to make here. One, overtime there was a tendency for these large holdings to get divided during family partitions, and this process did take place. Two, there was a tendency also for these-at least some of these-holdings to grow in size. This resulted from the particular practices of these land-owning families, such as lending in kind (i.e., grain). This system is known as Naagu system through which grain was lent out on the basis of compound interest in grain. Often big grain-surplus landlords lent out grain to marginal and small peasants on Naagu basis and as historical accounts inform us many small and marginal peasants ended up by losing their land to the Reddy landlords in their inability to pay back the Naagu interest. It is easy to surmise that in a situation where peasantry was largely illiterate and where the Reddy families also had control over the land records, the land records might have been easily manipulated to enable and legitimise the grabbing up of the peasant land holdings. Such practice was not uncommon during Nizam period.

All in all by 1960 two families had land in excess of two hundred acres and 11 families had land around hundred acres. All these were Reddy caste families. Besides these there were holdings between 3 to 20 acres held by many backward caste families. Of the total village cultivated land of 2250 acres, by 1960, around 1500 acres was in the hands of thirteen Reddy families. Rest of the 750 acres of land was divided up among backward caste families of middle, small and marginal peasants. Although family partitioning led to some dilution of land concentration the above was the situation obtaining in 1960.

A brief note on the productive forces of the village appears necessary here. The village cultivable land is about 2,250 acres. The village has one big tank with an ayacut area of about 500 acres and two small tanks with ayacut area together of about 300 acres. Thus even before the advent of canal irrigation there was about 800 acres of wet land which was under the tank irrigation. Besides this, well irrigation was always important to the village agricultural economy. The point here is that even before the coming of canal waters substantial amount of village land was under wet–rice cultivation – i.e., about 800 acres and there are good reasons to believe that dominant Reddy landlords owned much of this tank irrigated land.
The other crops that were grown prior to the total shift (or near total shift) to rice farming were millets, groundnut and castor. The entire region that abounds with rice mono-cropping today, before the advent of canal water, largely resembled today’s unirrigated part of Nalgonda. It is the construction of Nagarjuna Sagar Dam on Krishna river that changed the entire scenario. We now return to that aspect.

7.3. Canal Waters and Commercialisation

Canal waters came to Yadpalle village in 1967. The entire mandal Miryalguda and 24 villages in it came under Nagarjuna Sagar Dam canal irrigation. The region in toto shifted to rice mono-cropping. All the erstwhile unirrigated land came under irrigation for at least one crop. The second crop is cultivated most often but is dependent on the extent of rains in any particular year and the release of waters for second crop from the dam. But there is no shift to triple cropping of rice in this area. The advent of water and assured irrigation led to dramatic change in three aspects: a) commercialisation b) tractorisation and c) increasing labour demand.

Commercialisation of production took place with only one crop, i.e., rice/paddy. Paddy was earlier grown in this region as part-subsistence and part-commercial crop. Assured irrigation now turned paddy into a major marketable crop for all classes of landowners. Doubtless, big landlords, who earlier circulated excess grain only locally for purpose such as Naagu lending now started producing for market in a big way. The coming of Borlaug package and HYVs (i.e., High Yielding Variety seeds) in mid-1970s boosted this activity. Market increasingly penetrated the production process with seeds, fertilisers and pesticides being regularly bought from the market and produce being sold in the market. The practice of Naagu lending (lending grain for compound interest in grain) gradually gave way to money lending by landlords in cash. Most interesting change came about in the land market. Market in land always existed in Telengana. Particularly in Diwani or Khalsa tenure areas where peasants were also pattadars land changing hands was a common phenomenon. But irrigation brought in major impetus to land prices. Before 1967 in this village the price per acre of land was between Rs. 60-100 depending on the soil, location, fertility etc., In early 70’s the prices jumped to between Rs. 3,000 to 4,000 per acre. By 1980 the land price per acre was on an average Rs. 1,00,000. And by 1996 the price per acre of land was around 1,50,000 rupees. This is quite high by Telengana standards.

It is not only the prices of land but also the availability of land which became crucial. As land became valuable no one wanted to part with it; and as land for sale is scarce the prices went up. The dominant land owners have realised this and have taken care to safeguard their economic viability, with increasing intensification of productive activity most (98%) of them shifted from bullock ploughs to tractors. Tractorisation strengthened their position in return.

There were two tractors in the 1970 in the village. These were owned by, and catered to, the lands of the two big landlords who owned more than two hundred acres of land. In 70s tractors took no part in the harvesting of paddy. But situation changed by 1980. Eleven other big landlord families who owned large holdings also acquired tractors. The purchase of these was financed as loans mostly by the ADB (Agricultural Development Bank) branch of the SBI (State Bank of India) on easy half yearly instalments. By 80s
the nature of agricultural activity too changed. Harvesting of paddy increasingly became dependent on tractors. Particularly the threshing, winnowing and transporting activity became increasingly mechanized and tractors were used by the entire village. Tractors came to be used for the above activity even by the middle, small and marginal peasants. It was not only time saving but also labour saving. These above activities were added to the ploughing activity of the tractors. What this means is that the tractors of landlords were not only used for working on their own farms but were also hired out on regular basis. And machine (tractor) hire became a major source of income for the big land owners. Thus tractors not only helped make their agriculture more efficient and productive but also brought in cash incomes. Thus by 1990 many partitioned Reddy landlord families acquired tractors and their number of tractors was close to 30. Some backward caste rich peasants too bought tractors on Bank loans. In 1996 tractors owned by backward caste rich and middle peasants were about seven.

7.4. Patels, Doras and Capitalist landlords

The dominant Reddy families in the village Yadpally have benefited enormously from the process of change unleashed by canal irrigation. Between 1960-1990 they have moved from rain dependent subsistence agriculture to affluent commercial agriculture. The patels as they are traditionally known have also shown remarkable adaptability to intensification of production and commercialisation. The only process, which affected them negatively and with some inevitability is family partitioning. From 13 dominant families they have proliferated to 32 families. In 1995 only two families held land holdings nearer to hundred acres; 30 of them held landholdings between 20 to 45 acres. The dominant patel families have tractorised their farms, commercialised production and of late also started spreading their interests into urban businesses. Though it should be mentioned that the spread into trade, merchandise and tertiary activity such as private finance companies is relatively new, point is that the patels of Yadpalle are spreading into trade, merchandise and tertiary sector not by disposing their lands but on the profits they made on them. Here the landlord class does not face any dilemma. It is accumulating capital and re-investing it.

More importantly it should be mentioned that the landlord class transformed itself from a backward semifeudal class dependent on relatively unprofitable crops such as castor and groundnut to a modern capitalist landlord class which double crops paddy, markets 95% of the produce and reinvests surplus either in urban properties or in luxury consumption. (For example three of the big Reddy landlords own cars and almost all Reddy families in the village own scooters, refrigerators and houses comparable to that of the urban upper middle class).

In production relations too the Reddy landlords increasingly make use of either casual labourers or they make use of Jeethas – i.e., annual farm servants. And in peak seasons such as those of transplanting and harvesting they almost as a rule depend on migrant labour. The wage for male casual worker per day in 1990 was Rs 40. The female wage for casual labour was around Rs 25. The annual contract wage for Jeethas increased from about Rs 4000 per annum in 1980 to Rs. 7,000 per annum in 1995. The Jeethas are also offered a loan worth Rs. 2000 to Rs. 5000 (depending on demand) free of interest. (some of the landlords do charge 2% interest, per annum). On the whole even the Jeetha
labour can be called ‘free’ labour in the sense that no obligation is there on the Jeetha to stick to the same landlord after each year. In this arrangement there is debt relation no doubt, but there is no debt bondage. In that specific sense that it appears more capitalistic.

It is important to elaborate here the point that the patels (who also get themselves addressed as Doras, of late) have between 1960-90 thoroughly combined traditional caste power with modern economic power. It is in this precise sense that they are patels / Doras as well as capitalist landlords. A brief look at the village politics confirms this. In the 1959 village gram panchayat elections, a local communist party leader was elected. The CPI (which was till then united) was only shortly emerging from its heroic Telengana armed struggle. But the heat and enthusiasm of the CPI lasted only till one term. From 1964 to 1990 the local Reddy landlords ruled the village with complete hegemony. Perhaps here we should use the term ‘money power’ and the dominance resulting from it instead of hegemony. Because in the Gram Panchayat elections between 1964-1990 Yadapally Reddys used their caste and money power as freely as possible to get their caste members elected. Every time they used liquor, money and meat to win over the voters in elections; and every time they represented congress party. Besides this, as we see below, there are also other aspects of the economy of the village which confirm the emergence capitalistic farming and relations of power.

7.5. From Sharecropping to Tenancy

There was tenancy in the Yadpalle village right from the 70s onwards. But initially till early 80s it was in the form of share cropping. In sharecropping the tenant bears all the burden of labouring on the farm, in addition to that he brings the seeds and sows the crop; landlord on the other hand bears the expenses of fertiliser and pesticides, if any. After the harvest the crop is shared 50% each by the tenant and landlord. In this system tenants used to cultivate about 150 acres of land in the village. The landowners who rented out their lands on sharecropping basis were mainly the Reddy land owners. But gradually by 80s, particularly by mid-80s, the system changed and land owners started preferring fixed-rents in grain. The shift worked in favour of the landlords because under fixed-rent arrangement landlords have no risk of investing in the fertilisers and pesticides. Besides the landowners had also not to bother themselves with the general crop situation, yields and crop outcome, which may change owing to many contingent factors. The landlords simply collect the fixed amount of grain at the end of the harvest irrespective any kind of contingencies in the cultivation. The grain rents per acre/per crop was about 6 to 7 bags of paddy in 1985, and till 1988. By 1996 the rent went up to 12 to 13 bags of paddy per acre/per crop. When calculated in cash terms the tenant pays rent in grain (i.e., 12 bags of grain) worth Rs. 3,600/- per acre – per season according to current grain prices. The landlords presently are aware of this and increasingly are also pressing for fixed-rents in cash (instead of fixed-rent in grain). Mostly it is the big landlords who rent out their lands. And mostly it is in this village the toddy tapper caste peasantry, which rents in land. The toddy tapper peasants have a regular supplementary income from toddy, which provides them with some sort of financial cushion. They can withstand the vagaries of nature and market better. The rented holdings are generally from about 2 acres to 5 acres.
Occasionally they are even up to 10 acres. Thus between 1960 to 1990 the change is as below:

Share cropping → Fixed-rent in grain → Fixed-rent in cash.

**Figure 12: Changes in tenancy in Yadpalle (1960-95)**

This is the general tendency in tenancy. The trend towards fixed-rent in cash on paddy crop has only just begun and it for sure appears to be the future form. At present the predominant form of payment is payment in grain only.

**Map No.3 : Miryalaguda Mandal**
It is interesting to look at the tenancy flows. It is not only the small and marginal peasants who rent in land from big landowners. It is also some of the big landowners who rent in land from other big landowners. This happens mainly because it relieves the renting out big landlords from the task of personal cultivation and enables them to spare their time for urban businesses and employment. Thus the tenancy flows are three fold as are presented below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rents out</th>
<th>Rent in</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Big Reddy landowners (above 10 acres of holdings)</td>
<td>Small backward caste peasantry (Below 10 acres of holdings)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Big Reddy landowners</td>
<td>Big Reddy landowners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Small backward caste peasants</td>
<td>Small backward caste peasants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 13: Tenancy flows in Yadpalle**

What is interesting to see here is that there is no renting in of land by big landlords from small peasants owners. This process of reverse flow is also unlikely to emerge in the future as there is enormous competition for land among the small (backward caste) peasantry, which, indeed is resulting in annual upward revision of rents.

It is obvious from the above account of tenancy situation in the village that between 1960-1990 tenancy shifted from sharecropping to fixed-rent method. This means increasing security for the landowner and increased insecurity and vulnerability for the tenant. No tenancy agreement is a registered agreement and there is no legal security of any sort. All the arrangements are on the basis of oral agreements. Thus eviction of tenants does not pose any problem. But the point is that neither the tenant nor the landowner wants to do away with the agreement. The situation is such that the tenant hangs on to the plot in the face of cumulative disadvantages and insecurities and landowner maintains the relation precisely because he is able to avoid those disadvantages and insecurities. This is in spite of the fact that the region is irrigated and water supply is assured. In the village totally about 350 acres of land is under tenancy agreements in 1995. We now turn to the situation of the labour.

### 7.6. Migrant Labour

The canal irrigation enhanced labour demand tremendously. Before the advent of canal irrigation local labour sufficed the local demand. But rice double cropping and intensification and bringing in of all the village wasteland under canal cultivation has made local labour inadequate for the local demand. Consequently migrant labour started pouring in. Every year around 500 labourers come to Yadpalle village during transplanting and harvesting seasons. If only one crop (i.e., if in rainy season alone) is cultivated they come twice. But if two crops are cultivated in two seasons of a year the migrant labour comes four times a year. The migrant labour is coming to the village since 1970. In 1996 one landlord proudly told this author that he is employing migrant
labour for past 24 years. That he is getting the migrant-labour through the same ‘mestri’ or middleman (jobber).

Migrant labour comes to the Miryalguda canal irrigated region from the adjacent drought prone mandals of the Nalgonda district. Chronic drought and consequent under employment drives the labour of nearby mandals such as Devarakonda, Chandur, Nakrekal and Motkur to work in the villages of entire Miryalguda mandal. They virtually throng the fields. Generally a ‘mestri’ or jobber from the drought prone villages first comes to canal region villages and establishes a contract with the landowners of the irrigated villages. Then he goes back and brings in the labour. Usually the labourers bear their expenses on their own while coming in. But when the labour leaves the fields after the season is over, the landowners of irrigated villagers arrange tractors to leave them back at their home villages. Migrant labourers generally come along with their families. They are given thatched sheds for staying (which are generally the cattle sheds of the land lords).

The payment for the migrant labour is done on piece rate basis. It is the contract, which the ‘Mestri’ strikes with the landowner. The earnings of a male labourer in 1990 were about 10 to 20 kgs of paddy each day. His earning varied from 10 to 20 kgs because the migrant labourer not only works in the day but also works during harvesting in the nights. Generally in cash terms what a male labourer earns per day works out to Rs. 40 –70 per a 24 hour day. Female labourers earn about half of that. But as a rule almost all the times the migrant labourers are paid in grain rather than in cash. Usually in each season the migrant labourers stay from about 40 days to two months and when they leave each labourer earns about four to five bags of paddy. Unlike what one predicted there is not much of middleman or ‘Mestri’ exploitation. Often the ‘Mestri’ is one among them and one who works with them. Though it can not be denied that he may make two or more bags of paddy in the end for working as ‘Mestri’ or jobber.

Earlier, i.e., till mid-80s migrant labour used to come only from the relatively less developed areas of the Nalgonda district but since mid-80s the labour also comes increasingly from some districts of ‘Andhra’ region such as Prakasham and Guntur. They are also adjacent to Miryalguda as the entire irrigated region is the border region of the Nalgonda district with coastal Andhra districts. Most labourers who come are either Dalits or Dalit Christians. Thus the intensification of production, double cropping and extension of production (in terms of cultivation of grazing lands) has created enormous demand for labour. This has happened in spite of tractors and their labour saving use during both transplanting and harvesting periods.

The phenomenon of migrant labour is unique to irrigated region and it does not appear in the rest of the ‘developing’ and ‘under developed’ parts of Nalgonda district. Commercialisation of production with crop intensification, tractorization, cash tenancies and migrant labour thus exhibits all the features that are common to ‘green-revolution’ areas in rest of the parts of Andhra Pradesh and also the country.

7.7. Emergence of the Backward Castes?

As we mentioned earlier by 1990 the Reddy landlords of the village have thoroughly consolidated their position economically and politically. Socially also they have not been challenged by backward castes. The state intervention also strengthened their position
economically. Firstly, in terms of canal irrigation and secondly, in terms of loans and
subsidies for tractorization. NABARD (National Bank of Agricultural and Rural
Development) guidelines to local ADBs (Agricultural Development Banks of SBI)
clearly stipulate that either 25 acres of single crop land or 12 acres of double cropped
land should be provided as guaranty for loans to purchase tractors. Obviously it is the
Reddys in this village, who had such lands and they have utilized the facility. By 1995 of
2,250 acres of canal irrigated land in the village nearly 55% of the land was in the hands
of Reddy landlords. Many have by passed land ceiling act through paper partitions. The
total land owned by OBCs (other Backward classes i.e toddy tappers, yadavas etc.) was
to the tune of 40% land. The rest of 5% land was owned by Scheduled Castes and Tribes.
Politically too as mentioned earlier Reddy landowners have ruled the roost till 1990.
But there was change in 1995. In June 1995 gram panchayat elections the village
sarpanch seat was reserved for BC woman; and the MPTC (Mandal Praja Parishad
Territorial Constituency) membership seat was reserved for SC candidate. With this it
was inevitable that leadership changes hands from Reddys to backward castes and
Scheduled Castes. But the change was not dramatic. The local Reddy patels, who by
1995 were divided along party lines between Congress (I) and Telugu Desam Party
(TDP), have put up for contests the candidates that are pliant to them. TDP patels have
put up a Yadava woman for Sarpanch candidate and Congress (I) patels have put up a
toddy tapper caste woman. The TDP yadava caste woman won the election with the
support of the branch of the CPI (M) in the village.
There is a local branch of the CPI (M) in the village. This was started by a veteran of the
Telangana armed struggle whose family still continues to organise the party in the
village. The CPI (M) polls around 300-400 votes during local elections. The activities
they have are to attempt to raise daily and annual contract wages every year and to
pressurise the village authorities to implement programmes of rural development
promptly. Their presence has helped the TDP candidates win the election (since they
work in an alliance of National Front).
Can we call this change a case of the emergence of backward castes? Obviously we
cannot. The de facto power is still in the hands of the patels. Economically also the
backward castes are in no position to challenge the terms of dominance of Reddy patels.
There was no structural change, as we argued in the previous chapter, of land ownership
from upper castes to backward castes in the village. In these circumstances exclusive
political change, however much induced by the state through reservations, can only be
cosmetic. But there are possibilities that from now on the backward castes and scheduled
castes will view a change in political power in their favour as necessary and legitimate.
In future the subordinate classes and castes may make claims to de facto power and not
just de jure positions. But until then we can only put a question mark on the possibility
of state-induced change, in this region.
**Figure 14:**
Change in landownership in Yadpalle village between 1960-90

**Table 11: Land Ownership Pattern in Yadpalle Village**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land owned by</th>
<th>No. of holdings</th>
<th>Total land in acres</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BC, SC, ST marginal Peasants/labourers (below 2 acres of holdings in '96).</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC, SC, ST small peasants (from 2-5 acres of holdings in '96).</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>536</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC middle peasants (From 5-10 acres of holdings in '96).</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC &amp; upper caste rich peasants (10 to 20 acres of holdings in '96).</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper caste landlords (20 to 25 acres of holdings and above in '96).</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>661</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Village Revenue (*Pahani*) Records

**CASE STUDY – IV GUDUR**

**7.a.1. Introduction**

In this village study also it is argued that over the years between 1960-1990 no dramatic shift occurred in the social basis of political power though it could be observed that political power was fiercely contested between political parties/social groups. In this village too the process of rapid commercialisation, which resulted from canal irrigation,
strengthened the position of dominant castes/classes. It is argued that commercialisation process strengthened those dominant castes/classes who could adapt to the changed agro-economic situation most. While those dominant castes/classes who could not, declined. State intervention could also add to the strength of those dominant castes/classes who could better adapt to the commercialisation process. State political policy of holding periodic Panchayati Raj elections in itself did not lead to the shift in the social basis of political power. The electoral reservations to the Gram Panchayat could be effective only if political mobilisation from below made them so. Thus the quick economic modernisation of a section of the dominant class also enabled it to control the political processes and productive relations. Emergence of this particular section of dominant class as capitalist landlords and increasing problems faced by the petty commodity producers and agricultural labourers are common features which this village agrarian scenario too shares with the rest of the villages of the region.

The village history can be periodised into three phases; (a) pre-irrigation semi-feudal period (1960-67), (b) post-irrigation semi-feudal period (1967-1980) and (c) post-irrigation capitalist period (1980-to the present). As said in the previous study these periods overlap in degree and such periodisation is only for broad analytical purposes.

7.a.2. Historical Background

The Village Gudur under Nizam rule belonged to the Jagirdari system. It was under a Velama caste Deshmukh. Velama caste Deshmukhs and Doras are rare in this region. The Deshmukh controlled considerable land in the village. Out of 2411 acres of total land of the village, from 1900 to as late as 1940, the Deshmukh family had about 400 acres of land in its control. Besides the Velama Dora, there were other land owning families in the village. These were the three Brahmin Karanam households, which also held the Vatans. One Karanam was Patwari of the village and another Karanam was Malipatel. The Kotwal or Police patel post was in the hands of the Reddys. The brahmin Karanam families controlled around five hundred acres. The Reddy patels held land to the tune of thousand acres. These Reddy families were more numerous (around 30) and each had around 20 to 40 acres of land. Reddy families were settled in a separate hamlet of the village. In which they live till today. The rest of the land (around 500 acres) was owned by the backward castes such as yadavas, toddy tappers etc. in the form of small and marginal holdings. The situation obtaining in 1960 was however somewhat different. Because in this village the Telangana armed struggle (1945-51) did make a dent on the agrarian structure. Clashes and violence over land control took place in this village. Some land was distributed. Particularly around 200 acres of land of the Velama Dora was distributed. One Karanam Brahmin was shot dead. The excess grain in the granaries of the Velama Dora was distributed. By 1960, all in all, the Velama landlord had about 200 acres of land of which was later partly sold to the Nizam Sugar Factory established nearby in the late seventies (110 acres) and remaining partitioned among the three sons of the Dora. Brahmin Karnams held around three hundred acres and Reddys held on to their thousand odd acres. Thus by 1960 out of 2411 acres of total land around 1500 acres was in the hands of: the Velamas (200), Brahmans (300) and Reddys (1000). These formed around 35 families. While the remaining 910 acres was owned by the rest
of the village, i.e., mostly backward castes. Scheduled Castes were only marginal landholders and basically agricultural labourers. This was the situation obtaining in 1960. A brief note on village productive forces needs to be made here. Out of the total 2411 acres of village land, before 1967 (i.e., advent of canal water), around 551 acres used to be either single cropped or double cropped according to the rains of any particular year. Almost all the wet land belonged to the three dominant caste families – Velama, Brahmmin and Reddy. The soils here are not rich and fertile black soils. They are red soils. The rest of the land (around 1900 acres) used to be under dry cultivation. Crops such as millets, pulses, jowar and castor used to be grown as dry crops. Almost the entire village depended on dry crops.

Coming to social relations, the Doras and karnams used to extract Vetti (labour service) from the lower castes. This involved manual, menial labour during marriages, deaths etc. in the Dora’s and karnam’s families and regular, seasonal ploughing of Dora’s and Karnam’s lands. Apparently the Reddy caste families did not extract Vetti labour here. This practice of Vetti extraction continued till the end of the Telangana armed struggle.

Figure 15: Change in landownership in Gudur village between 1960-90

Table 12: Land Ownership Pattern in Gudur Village

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land owned by</th>
<th>No. of Holdings</th>
<th>Total land under the category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BC &amp; SC/ST marginal peasants/labourers (below-2 acres of holdings in ’96)</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>133 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC, SC, ST small peasants) (from 2-5 acres of holding in ’96)</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>245 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC middle peasants in ’96 (5 to 10 acres of holdings)</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>660 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC and upper caste rich peasants in ’96 (10 to 20 acres of holdings)</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>545 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper caste landlords (20-25 acres and above in ’96)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>493 acres</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Village Revenue (Pahani) Records
7.a.3. Canal waters and commercialisation

The processes of commercialisation in this village are the same as described in the earlier village study. The Canal water came to this village in 1967. With the coming of the NSP (Nagarjuna Sagar Project) water entire village shifted to rice mono-cropping. The village grazing lands also were brought under the wet-rice cultivation. The village tank came to be filled by the NSP water and the land under it was cultivated for two crops (551 acres). The rest of the 1900 acres is cultivated certainly for one crop and the second crop depends on the extent of rains and release of waters from the NSP in any particular year.

In the absence of Canal water for the second crop the villagers switch over to pulses. Much like in the earlier study, in this village too irrigation brought about changes in three important aspects: a) general commercialisation, b) tractorisation and c) increasing labour demand. Of this first we deal with the commercialisation and tractorisation aspects.

Following the pattern in the entire irrigated region in this village too commercialisation took place basically with paddy. Irrigation turned paddy into a major marketable crop. All classes of cultivators took to producing paddy for market. While water came in 1967, the HYV (High Yielding Varities) seeds arrived in 1970s. These improved productivity. Yield almost doubled. But with these the intensity of agricultural operations too increased. The cultivators needed first to invest in fertilisers, seeds and pesticides; then the cultivation of HYV crops required more agronomic care, such as weeding more often, guarding against new pests etc., than was needed earlier. The yield depended on all these factors. We are making some of these aspects explicit because even in an iniquitously distributed land situation not all landlords – not of all castes – emerged successful from intensified, commercialised agriculture; and for this village this aspect had crucial bearing on the evolution of agrarian structure and village politics.

The commercialisation process involved two important aspects a) more intensive care and management of agriculture and b) more intensive interaction with the urban market. Only those who could perform both the tasks efficiently survived the vagaries of the market quite irrespective of how much ever land they owned. In this village it is basically the Reddy caste landowners who showed the necessary ambidexterity of managing both the farms as well as markets. The Velama and the Brahmin Karanam landlords failed in the process. Consequently overtime they had to dispose much of their land. Land ceiling legislation has not made any difference to the land ownership situation as the land distributed from Velamas to BCs was as little as two acres.

As said above it is the Reddy landlords who proved capable of withstanding the pressures of intensive cultivation and making most of the benefits of it. It was also the Reddy landlords who tractorised their farms early. They brought tractors for two purposes: a) for using them on their own farms and b) for hiring out. By 1980s the availability of tractors in big number - around 25 – transformed the entire agricultural scenario of the village. Not only the peasants who owned bigger holdings hired tractors on their farms but also even small peasants owning less than an acre used tractors for ploughing. Tractors replaced the bullock, bullock cart and the plough in more than one way.
The number of tractors in the village in 1996 was 39. Of these the tractors owned by the Reddy patels were 33. One Muslim owned one tractor and rest of the five were owned by backward caste rich peasants. 

Another aspect of commercialisation, which affected the village economy, was the land market. The price of land increased much in the same way as in Yadpalle. In 1960s the price of per acre of land was around Rs. 50-80. In this 1970s (after the advent of canal water) the price was around Rs. 2000 to Rs. 3000; in the early eighties the price per acre was Rs. 65,000. By 1990 the price per acre went up to Rs. 1,00,000 and in 1996 it was around Rs. 1,50,000. Thus the land prices and market in them clearly reflects the intensity of the process of commercialisation. But what is interesting is that in spite of the rise in the monetary value of the land not all landlords succeeded in keeping it under their control adapting themselves to the changed agro-economic and agronomic situation.

7.a.4. Doras, Karanams and Patels

As mentioned in the earlier section this village had three types of dominant land owning families. Between 1960 and 1990 these have fared disparately. The Velama Doras have sold around 110 acres of land to the Nizam Sugar Factory in the late seventies and monetarily benefited from it. They did not invest the money in agriculture but they transferred it to urban pursuits. The remaining land around a hundred acres was partitioned among the three sons and they also did not manage it well. Overtime they too disposed it. Presently the Velama Dora’s family holds about 25 acres. Their socio-political influence too drastically declined owing to economic down slide, political unimportance and social challenges (from left parties and movements). The significance of the Dora’s family declined.

The Karanam families could have strengthened their economic position between 1960 to 1990 but they too have sold much of their land to backward castes and to new settlers from ‘Andhra’ (i.e., coastal Andhra) districts of Guntur and Krishna. The latter, who are generally more rigorous at farming practices, came anticipating Krishna water to this region. Thus the Karanam families too lost much of their lands. Presently the three Karanam families together own around 35 acres. The process of decline among Karanam families took place because of dowries during marriages and because of general wasteful consumption patterns. Even though at present the village revenue officer is a descendent of the Karanam family he does not command any semi-feudal power.

The one caste of dominant class, which got strengthened between 1960-1990, is the Reddy caste. They used all their capacities to adapt themselves to the intensification of production and commercialisation of the entire process. They have quickly switched over to tractors and modernised their productive forces. This enabled them to transform themselves into capitalist landlords. Consequently they have not parted with their landed property much. Till today they happen to control around 1000 acres of land. Besides this the Reddy landowners are also united under the Congress party. They have also supplied candidates for state assembly elections from this village. And to a large extent succeeded in keeping the Backward and Scheduled Castes in their fold. Which is currently being questioned since a decade.
7.a.5. Tenancy Situation

Tenancy is an important aspect to agricultural economy in this village too. In the entire irrigated region tenancy in terms of fixed rent (per season/per crop) in grain came into existence in late seventies. Prior to that the prevailing practice was sharecropping. Sharecropping as described in the previous study involved the sharing of inputs as well as the contingencies of production process and the produce by the landlord and the tenant. Though assured irrigation certainly reduced the possibility of total crop failure, the ensuing process of commercialisation made agriculture vulnerable to market fluctuations. The landlords who wanted to spend their time on non-agricultural pursuits (and thereby are unable to afford intensive personal cultivation) increasingly shifted to renting out land for fixed rent in grain. In this village generally the tenancy flows are from:

Big landowners ———> Small peasants

(Brahmin, Reddy Velama) ———> (Backward caste)

Small peasants ———> Small Peasants

(Backward caste) ———> (Backward caste and Scheduled Caste)

Figure 16: Tenancy Flows in Gudur

As mentioned earlier fixed-rent tenancy allows landlords (particularly Reddy landlords in this case) to spare their time for urban jobs, businesses and also politics. The Reddy landlords of this village are very active in Mandal level politics and the wherewithal and time for the politics comes from their tenanted peasantry. The land rents in the early eighties were about five bags of Paddy per acre/per season. It was about eight bags of paddy (per acre/per season) in late eighties. In 1996 it was about 10 to 12 bags of paddy (per season/per acre) depending on the soil, location etc. For second crop generally the tenants pay one to two bags less. There doesn’t seem to be much trend toward fixed-cash
rents in this village; but if that is the tendency in nearby villages there is no reason why it will not appear in this village also.

Generally the tenants (who are mostly from backward castes) reported losses. The holdings they cultivate are integrated completely into the market and therefore are vulnerable to a large extent to its fluctuations. They have to hire tractors for ploughing and for much work at the time of harvesting, from the same landlords who rented out lands. Besides these small and marginal peasants also have to buy all the farm inputs – seeds, fertilisers and pesticides – in the market. The prices for the finished product (i.e., paddy) are generally at low ebb when they sell the product. Because they sell mostly at the peak seasons (i.e., immediately after the harvest) and can not afford to store the grain and wait till the prices climb up. Owing to all these reasons 80% of the tenants interviewed complained that they are in losses. The only benefit they have, they said, is the straw, which they get after the harvesting and which is useful for maintaining a few milch animals or covering the roof of their huts. For these peasants, both the increasing rents as well as unfavourable terms of trade with the urban market work against their interests. Since no tenancy is a registered one and the bargaining strength of the tenant is politically and economically weak we can expect the situation of the tenants only to worsen in the future. But it is necessary here to remind us that the majority of landlords still cultivate their farms on their own and tenancy despite being a conspicuous feature is not an overwhelming one. The fact that the total tenanted land in the village is only 300 acres testifies to this. Now we turn to the aspect of increase in labour demand owing to commercialisation.

7.a.6. Migrant Labour

We mentioned in the section on commercialisation that one of its features was the increase in labour demand. With the switch over to rice mono-cropping and with the bringing into cultivation of the village grazing land the demand for labour too increased. The local agricultural labour, consisting basically of Scheduled Caste labourers (also to some extent backward caste labour) fell short of the demand. Consequently migrant labour poured in. In this village around 500 to 600 migrant labourers come every year. They come four times if paddy is double cropped and two times if only single crop is cultivated. The migrant labour comes not only from the backward mandals of Nalgonda district but also from the adjacent coastal Andhra districts. It comes mostly from an adjacent mandal called Macharla and is known as “Macharla labour”.

In this village nearly three fourths of the migrant labour comes to meet the demand of the Reddy landlords. Rest of the one fourth works for the remaining part of the village. We are not going to elaborate the wage conditions and working conditions of the migrant labour here because they are the same as discussed in the earlier case study of Yadpalle.

7.a.7. Politics from Below

In this village politics for Gram Panchayat elections always swung from one side to the other. The dominant castes, Brahmin, Velamas and Reddys-always stood for Congress party and the backward castes to a large extent stood for CPI (M). The first three terms (after the initiation of Gram Panchayat) from 1959 to 1975 were won by the Reddy Patels
from the Congress Party. From 1975 onwards the CPI (M) started organising in the village. So far they have won three terms since 1975. But the political arena in which the local Reddys participate is a larger one. They also participate in assembly elections. Twice the Reddy candidates from this village have also won the state assembly elections on Congress (I) tickets. Thus this fact makes them within the village a formidable force. The CPI (M) which organised on issues of wage labour and better remunerative prices for farm produce has attracted the support of the backward castes. Interestingly the Scheduled Castes support the Congress (I) party. In 1995 Gram Panchayat elections the village Gudur was reserved for a Backward caste candidate. The CPI (M) candidates won the election with a thin majority. The candidates who won the election told this scholar that the Reddys put up another backward caste candidate as proxy against him (on Congress ticket) and that the other candidate would have won the election but for the vigorous campaign by the CPI (M). In the village everybody agrees that had the Gram panchayat Sarpanch seat not been reserved, certainly a Reddy candidate would have won it. This village politics demonstrate two things:

1) The economically strengthened dominant castes—who got strengthened basically because of canal irrigation – leave no stone unturned to safeguard their socio-political dominance. This is particularly the case with Reddy landlords.

2) Even the political policy of state intervention of electoral reservations can be successful only if it is backed by political mobilisation from below. The CPI (M) politics did not bring about much change in agrarian structure. They helped bring to power a backward caste sarpanch.

SUMMARY: MIRYALGUDA MANDAL

7.b.1. The Emergence of Capitalist Landlords

We began with the hypothesis that, in the research district, between 1960-1990, three processes a) state intervention b) commercialisation and c) political movements from below produced incomplete polarisation. In the study we have taken the term agrarian structure synonymous with landholding pattern. But our study of the two villages in the irrigated region of Nalgonda district disproved the hypothesis. Though there was deconcentration of big landholdings, the rapid commercialisation process that came about in the wake of canal irrigation strengthened the landlords. The process transformed the semi-feudal landlords into capitalist landlords. The change is more qualitative.

In tracing the three processes: state intervention (in terms of rural development programmes, land reforms and electoral reservations); commercialisation (of land, labour and input-output markets) and political movements from below, the researcher faced the same problems as mentioned earlier. The data on rural development programmes was not available for the period 1960 to 1990. And the information on land distribution owing to land ceiling legislation was available only at the village level from village revenue records. Even the impact of the above two is marginal on the agrarian structure. Therefore the scholar concentrated more on the process of commercialisation and politics from below: which had most impact on the agrarian structure and politics. Irrigation came to the region in 1967. With the onset of irrigation the entire region shifted from millets, pulses and castor to rice mono cropping. Paddy, which used to be grown
only under tanks and to a lesser extent under wells, now is cultivated on the entire village land and by all the classes of cultivators. Though this began right from 1967 onwards the major shift to commercial production of Paddy appears to have started only from early seventies when the Borlaug package of HYVs were introduced. It was the beginning of ‘green revolution’ in this region. The HYVs also necessitated purchase of fertilisers and pesticides. The consequent high yields were often being sold in the market. Thus in this region the major impetus to commercial production came in the 1970s. But the change in the other productive forces came somewhat late. It is in the early eighties that the tractors entered the scene in a major way. True, a few big landlords had tractors even in the 1970s but they catered to their own farms. But in the 1980s the purchase of tractors by all the big landowners, mostly on bank loans (on subsidies) transformed the technical aspect of the agriculture drastically. Tractors replaced the bullock and the plough, not only of the landlords, but even of the small and middle peasants as tractor hire became increasingly a common practice. Tractors came to be used not only at the time of ploughing (on piece rate contract) but also for threshing and winnowing purposes. As we mentioned earlier this process of tractorisation benefited the tractor-owning landlords to a large extent and we also see that they belonged to a particular caste - Reddy. Not all castes of landlords succeeded in doing this.

The commercialisation of production and the later process of tractorisation benefited the Reddy landlords most. The dominant landlords (who each owned more than 20 acres of land) have all purchased tractors and modernised their farms so as to keep them in tune with the intensification of cultivation that is associated with the commercial paddy production. The state intervention obviously helped landlords strengthen their position. Since tractor loans always required collateral, it is mostly landlords who own around 20 acres and above that benefited from the subsidised loans of the Banks. The tractorisation in turn helped them make their own agriculture productive and efficient and also helped them earn cash-incomes in the form of tractor-hire. But as made explicit above not all landlords succeeded in doing this. In this region it is mostly the Reddy landlords who modernised their farms with the tractors and adapted themselves swiftly to the intensive cultivation. The Brahmin and Velama landlords, who could not do the above, declined and their holdings dwindled; there with their influence.

7. b. 2. The ‘Dilemma’ of the Semi-Feudal Class?

In these villages of irrigated region the erstwhile semi-feudal class consisted of Brahmin, Reddy and Velama castes. Has their semi-feudal power declined between 1960-1990? Has there been qualitative change in social relations of production? Does the semi-feudal class face any dilemma in this irrigated region regarding its survival and reproduction? These are some of the question we discuss here.

Firstly the erstwhile semi-feudal castes have not declined in this region. On the contrary the assured canal irrigation made their economic position stronger. But one caveat is necessary here. Only those dominant castes, which have adapted themselves to the changed agro-economic and agronomic situation, have kept up their position intact. Those who have not, declined. Thus those who have modernised their productive forces by acquiring tractors have survived and became stronger. They had to be efficient on both fronts: in managing production relations on farms as well as exchange relations in
the urban market. Certainly Reddys who have strong caste solidarity within and across the villages succeeded most in the process. Supra-village contacts helped them socially, economically and politically.

Production relations have become certainly capitalistic. Casual labour is predominant and preferred most by landlords. There is *Jeetha* labour i.e., annual farm servant labour, but it too cannot be called a labour-tying practice. No *Jeetha* stays put to a landlord for more than a year. But despite the above, are the production relations totally impersonal and business like? This author thinks no. The production relations are capitalistic at the economic plane i.e., in the work place, while hiring labour etc. (at the level of the ‘base’) but at the level of the general social relations (in terms of rigid caste hierarchy and in the space of everyday social relations i.e., at the level of ‘super structure’) there are strong elements of semi-feudal power. There are reasons in that sense to call the capitalist-landlord class as semi-feudal. Capitalist-landlord class is given that name because it combines traditional caste power with modern economic power. But precisely in exercising the traditional caste power that the class is semi-feudal. It is semi-feudal in general social life while it is rational and capitalistic in economic life.

Finally is this class facing any dilemma? We believe no. The capitalist-landlords in irrigated region are accumulating capital and re-investing it. They are reinvesting in agriculture (in terms of buying tractors and related in puts) and more than that they are investing the capital made out of agriculture in urban businesses, such as private finance companies, real estate businesses and trading activity. Thus the semi-feudal/capitalist-landlord class does not face any dilemma. The landlord class also does not face problems in its survival and reproduction because of reasons such as heavy dowries during marriages. Thanks to the rise in land prices, in this region, the dowries are not difficult to meet. The only process which affected the landlords negatively and led to the deconcentration of landholdings is the inevitable family partitioning. It is because of family partitioning that we can not find land concentration at a scale that it existed around 1960.

The two villages we surveyed supplied Congress candidates to the provincial level politics. The landlord class has not faced much social and political challenge. It is always organised under the Congress party and active in the pursuit of power. It is because the landlord class modernised itself and benefited/strengthened from the commercialisation process economically that it can also withstand the challenges from the larger society and polity. The recently introduced electoral reservations for sarpanches and MPTC members posts have been successful only where the political parties which mobilise people from below have been active. Otherwise the local landlords manipulate even the electoral reservations and run the local institutions with their own appointed men. At least in the near future total emergence of the Backward/Scheduled Castes in local politics appears a difficult possibility.

**7.b.3. Persistence and Polarisation**

Village studies in this region have shown that both the processes – persistence of the middle, small peasantry – and the increasing polarisation between classes – are taking place. The middle and small peasantry, which comes from backward castes, has not sold out its lands to the big landlords and disappeared. On the other hand the small and
middle peasantry too benefited from the two processes a) the deconcentration of big land holdings – a process whereby incompetent landlords sold their land to backward castes eg. Brahmin and Velama landlords in Gudur and b) the process of irrigation. Since not all castes of landlords have modernised their productive forces and succeeded in the process of commercialisation some have disposed their lands. These have been bought by backward castes. Some landlords have sold their lands (mostly to Backward castes) because they have developed urban interests. Thus in the two villages studied during 1960-90 considerable land shifted into the hands of the Backward castes. The irrigation process has also led to the security of the crop situation and added greatly to the persistence of the small and middle peasants. But along with this process, polarisation too took place. Polarisation in the sense that the big landlords have not expanded the land under their control but have certainly increased the capital intensity of their farms. It is in that sense that the gap between the different classes has increased. Capital accumulation does not take place in the form of land accumulation. If capital accumulation had also been land accumulation then the big landlords would have swallowed up many small and middle holdings. On the contrary the accumulation process allows the small peasants and middle peasants to persist and at the same time exploits them. Tenancy is an example as to how this process takes place. Ceiling on landed property also probably prevents the process of land accumulation. For many landlords are aware of the problems involved in having excess landholdings; in spite of the fact that they have succeeded in circumventing the land reforms. Thus there is the process of persistence and polarisation. The condition of the marginal holdings (less than 2 acres) and agricultural labourers is the worst. The rates at which the wages have grown over the period 1960-90 are far below the rates at which land prices and land rents have grown.
Chapter 8

STAGNATION AND OUT MIGRATION: ECOLOGY INDUCED

PROLETARIANISATION

CASE STUDY – V: YEPUR

We present in this Chapter is the case study from Devarakonda Mandal of Nalgonda district, Andhra Pradesh. Devarakonda Mandal falls in the third category of sub regions (of Nalgonda district) discussed in the introduction to this thesis. This region is described as ‘underdeveloped region’ of Nalgonda district according to the criterion of irrigation. There are no canals in the region and entire region is dependent on rainfall. Rainfall itself is very low in this region. Agriculture is totally dependent on electrified, dug wells and since 1980 on tube wells. Adding to the crises of drought is the fact that ground water levels are also going down each year. The survival strategies of different classes of this rocky, red soil region are of much interest in the context of this thesis; all the more so because this entire region serves as a labour reserve for the irrigated region.

8.1. Introduction

The impact of the three aspects of our study, state intervention, commercialisation and political movements from below found to be marginal in this village study. The village agrarian structure showed marked stagnation vis-a-vis land owning classes and out migration and pauperisation vis-à-vis labouring classes. State intervention in terms of holding periodic Panchayati Raj elections did not lead to shift of power from upper castes to lower castes. The only aspect of the state intervention, which had beneficial impact on village agriculture as well as quality of life, was electrification. The shift in political power from upper castes to lower castes came in 1995, but it was because of electoral reservations rather than because of general political awareness. Thus in this village from drought prone region ecology plays a crucial role in determining the economic stagnation of the dominant castes/classes and the out migration of the entire peasantry for work. There was an obvious process of proletarianisation of peasantry into migrant labour. But this process was more induced by ecology and drought than by the dynamics of village political economy.

8.2. The Productive Forces

Before discussing the survival strategies of different rural classes it is important to discuss the village productive forces. The village has 2060 acres of land under it. Of this only 1340 acres is arable and the rest is simply uncultivable. The village has four small tank-like structures under which a total of 45 acres gets irrigated depending on the rainfall. Rainfall itself is extremely low in this region. Earlier there used to be one more tank but it dried up and was later levelled up for cultivation. Of the 1340 acres cultivated, 45 acres of paddy is cultivated under tanks. Besides since 1980 many private
tube wells have been sunk. Under these tube wells, numbering around 69, about 120 acres of paddy, groundnut etc., are grown. Thus the total irrigated land of the village is only 165 (120 + 45) acres. On rest of the 1175 acres of arable dry land mainly crops such as castor, Bajra and millets are grown. The soils being infertile red soil and water being extremely scarce, no high value commercial crops can be grown. Added to this scenario is the fact that ground water table is falling every year.

Map No.4: Devarakonda Mandal

8.3. Survival Strategies of Different Classes

Ecological conditions determine the strategies of reproduction of different classes. Here land ownership has only relative importance in determining the politico-economic strategies of survival, because ecological conditions affect all classes evenly. Thus it is
not difficult in this region to locate even a landowner of 15 acres among the seasonal labourers. The land values in this village are extremely low: Rs. 8000 to 10,000 for dry land and about Rs. 20,000 for wet land. But in spite of the above blurring of class distinctions (in the face of drought), differentiating landlords from peasantry (in a broad sense) is still useful. The survival strategies of each in the face of the common enemy, drought, are different. The landlords have adapted themselves to the situations in two ways: firstly, by making modest (some times quite successful) ventures into urban tertiary sector and trade and secondly, by switching over from traditional crops such as castor, millets to horticulture. Some landlords successfully combine both the aspects mentioned above and some pursue either of the strategies separately.

Firstly, given the dismal agricultural situation many landlords have put a high premium on the education of their children. In the course of the fieldwork it was found that one of the sons of a landlord was studying engineering in the U.S.A. Social pressures within the upper castes have been added to this. Where the efforts at education have not been successful the attempt was to turn to trade and business.

Secondly, within the agriculture the landlords have shifted to horticulture. It is common for a landlord to have a mango or sweet-lime garden of 10 to 25 acres. These are high yielding varieties and the crop can be harvested within four to five years of planting. Shift from traditional crops to horticulture is a major strategy of surviving drought. Some backward caste peasants also started emulating landlords and have planted sweet-lime and mango on smaller plots ranging from one to two acres. Thus in the village Yepur 11 backward caste peasants had planted orchards in land totalling 42 acres.

### TABLE 13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Holding size in acres</th>
<th>No. of Holdings</th>
<th>Total Land in acres</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-5</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>400</td>
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<tr>
<td>10-20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-35</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>above 35</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total land:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>1340</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 8.4. Droughts and Out Migration

There is a clear-cut process of ecology-induced pauperisation in the village. Nearly three fourths of the village goes to the irrigated region of Nalgonda in search of work as seasonal migrant labour. All the middle, small and marginal peasants travel along with their families to irrigated region for work. In fact calling these migrant labourers as so many categories of peasants is meaningless, however much land they may have back in their villages. These seasonal migrants are divided into labour gangs or groups. Each group consists of 50 to 120 labourers. They form groups across castes. The much emphasised caste distinctions disappear when they are formed into groups. When they migrate, in the irrigated region, they work together and live together. Even Dalit
labourers share the same thatched shed with other caste labourers. It is a clear case of class formation in a sense. The migrant labour acts as a class, despite the fact that it is divided along caste lines. The same phenomenon does not operate once they are back in the village. The peasants/labourers, when they come back from the irrigated canal region step back again into their caste roles, living in their caste determined streets and houses of the village, Thus firstly, there is migration to a great extent of even land owning peasants. Secondly, they migrate as a class in spite of all the differences.

The process of out migration by different classes of peasants is one survival strategy in the face of acute drought conditions. Every season nearly 700 to 800 peasants travel to the canal irrigated region from this village and get engaged in agricultural labour. These migrant labourers generally prefer wages in kind to wages in cash. It is generally the opinion that they migrate seasonally to paddy growing region precisely to earn some rice. The villagers see the seasonal migration as a work opportunity. Not only they migrate as seasonal labourers some also migrate as annual farm servants i.e., as jeetas. This migration for annual contract Jeetam occurs less frequently. But in general the migrant peasant sees the activity of migration as a great help before the acute crises which he otherwise faces.

8.5. Emergence of Backward Castes

The grassroots politics of village also did not exhibit much dynamism in the village. The village Gram Panchayat was headed by Reddy landlords for 27 years. Only recently the electoral reservations made possible (in 1995) the election of a Yadava sarpanch. He himself admits that had there been no reservation he would not have elected and the local Reddys would have continued in power. Thus the entire village energies are devoted to fighting drought in individual capacities and no one seemed greatly enthusiastic to discuss politics. Great cynicism about politics and their effectiveness is pervasive. The village comes under a region dominated by the CPI. The local MLA and MP are from the CPI. In this village the CPI polls around 200 votes. But in the 1995 Gram Panchayat elections in the 22 villages of the mandal 19 were reserved for BC, SC & ST candidates (9-BC, 3-SC, 7-ST), and they have won the seats comfortably. Mandal president is an ST candidate. Thus the state-induced political change at the grassroots level has arrived even to this region.
Chapter 9

CONCLUSION

We began with the hypothesis that in the study district Nalgonda, three processes, a) state intervention, b) Commercialisation and c) political movements from below produced, between 1960 and 1990, incomplete and partial polarisation between peasant classes within the agrarian structure. By agrarian structure we basically meant the structure of land ownership. We proceeded to study the district firstly, by looking into the trends in the secondary data i.e., the district data collected from the statistical abstracts prepared by the Government of Andhra Pradesh and secondly by studying five sample villages. Primary statistical survey was conducted in four villages: two semi-irrigated and two irrigated. This it was hoped would allow us to move from the general to the particular. The attempt was to study the trends in the macro district data and compare them with the micro village studies. The broad aim as mentioned in the ‘objectives’ section was to attempt to characterise the evolution of agrarian relations; and to estimate the extent of the evolution of capitalist relations in agriculture’. In pursuing the study we faced some practical methodological problems. These methodological problems are discussed below before discussing the findings of the study. Firstly the secondary data concerning the agrarian structure is only available from 1970 onwards and not since 1960. The World Agricultural Census is conducted from only 1970 onwards and once in every five years. Therefore for the year 1960 we had to depend on the census data of 1959. The data of 1959 is available for the entire Telengana region and not specifically for Nalgonda district. This was a major problem with the secondary data on agrarian structure. The secondary data on the other aspects of the agrarian structure—such as agricultural labourers and cultivators—and on aspects of agricultural economy—such as rainfall, irrigation, and cropping patterns—is available and provided for the whole period 1960-90. The data on electoral performance of the political parties is provided for the period 1952-1989 and the data on the population trends of the scheduled castes and tribes is available for the period 1960-1991.

Trends in the Secondary Data:

Here we briefly discuss the trends in the secondary data regarding the agrarian structure. Information on land ownership patterns in the secondary data is divided into two heads: ‘Area Operated According to Holding size’ and under ‘Percentage Distribution of Area Operated’. The information is for two decades. As we mentioned earlier the World Agricultural Census is conducted only since 1970, therefore we have data for the period 1970-1990. If we see the trends in the area operated according to holding size, we observe that the area operated in 0 to 5 and 4 to 5 hectares has increased substantially. And the area operated under the holding sizes 5 to 10 hectares to 50 plus hectares has declined drastically: which means that over the years 1970 to 1990, the area operated under small holdings (below 5 hectares) has increased; and the area operated under bigger holdings (above 5 hectares) has decreased. That means the smaller holdings of 1 to 4 hectares size have increased rapidly at the expense of big holdings of the size of 5 hectares and above. This is a trend towards deconcentration and fragmentation of land
holdings rather than a trend towards concentration. Particularly the area operated under the size holdings of 1 to 2 hectares to 3 to 4 hectares has increased at a rapid pace. The percentage of area operated under different sizes of holdings shows the same trend. Though this data tells that still considerable land is there under big holdings (10 hectares and above size), the general trend it presents is that during 1970-1990 the percentage of land under small and medium holdings has increased. The area operated under big holdings i.e., 10 hectares and above has come down from 38% to 17%. But 17% is considerable land which means landlordism, of whatever variety, is prevalent in the district. The trends in the percentage distribution of number of holdings (under different size classes) are almost dramatic. These show that in 1990-91 nearly 47% of the total holdings were in the category of 0-1 hectare. The overall trends, thus in the secondary data, are two fold: Firstly, there is a clear cut trend towards deconcentration of land ownership. Secondly along with the deconcentration process there is also a process of land fragmentation at work. This is what comes out of the secondary data.

While the above being the trends in the secondary data pertaining to the land ownership pattern, there were some major problems in collecting the data on rural development programmes. Data on these programmes is available at macro-district level and not at the village level; and that too from 1980 onwards only. These statistics are available only since the inception of the IRDP programme. On the rural development programmes implemented in the district before 1980 data is not available at all either at the district level or at the mandal, village levels. As mentioned earlier this disappointed the scholar very much. Attempt was made to contact the scholars who are working specifically on rural development programmes, but they too informed that the data is available only for the past two or three years. Thus this was a major insurmountable problem. Secondary data on land reforms is also not provided by the government anywhere. The researcher had to collect information on this aspect at the village level from the village land revenue records too. Secondly, there were some problems faced during the fieldwork for primary studies too. The villages were approached through stratified proportionate random samples. The problem with this is that the castes which are approached according to their numerical proportion wield socio-political and also economic influence disproportion to their number. This would be true even when we prepare a stratified proportionate random sample according to size classes and not just castes. This is a problem not just of this or that statistical method but statistical methods themselves. The qualitative dimensions of political power relations can be captured only through qualitative analysis. Reddys Brahmins and Velamas in this case for example wield economic power and socio-political influence far greater than their numerical proportion. And backward and scheduled castes who form the major chunk of the village population wield less economic and socio-political power and influence. Of late the numbers began to prevail, and the backward and scheduled castes began to exercise political power. With these remarks we turn to the discussion of the substantive aspects of the thesis.

Results of Primary Survey

The primary survey conducted in four villages can be contrasted with the secondary data. The primary survey shows that the process of deconcentration of land holdings is taking place in the semi-irrigated region but not in the irrigated
region. The primary survey shows that in the two semi-irrigated villages that we have studied the marginal, small and middle peasants have increased their share of land while the rich peasants and landlords have declined over the period 1960 to 1990. It is also interesting to see that in the semi-irrigated region the marginal, small and middle peasant classes belonged predominantly to scheduled and backward castes. At the same time the rich peasants and landlords belonged to the upper castes. This is quite consistent with the case studies of the villages of semi-irrigated villages in the Ramannapet mandal which make a case for the emergence of the backward castes in the region. Our primary survey supports the findings of the qualitative village case studies for which we have relied on the anthropological method.

The data we have generated regarding the irrigated region through our primary survey also confirms findings through qualitative village studies. The land under control of the landlords has slightly increased during the survey period. Certainly there is an emergence of capitalist landlords in the irrigated region. What, however, we did not understand is that why the rich peasants of the irrigated region have declined over time between 1960 and 1990 while the middle peasants have increased their share of land. While the trends that our primary data shows for the irrigated region are mixed, they confirm two things (a) that there is a polarization tendency at work; (b) that the marginal, small and even rich peasants are losing out in the process. The tendencies among the middle and rich peasants however puzzling. If landlords and middle peasants are doing better there is no reason why the rich peasants also cannot do well. We do not have a ready answer to explain this phenomenon. But however the evidence we found earlier for the argument that there is an emergence of subordinate castes in the semi-irrigated region and that there is an emergence of capitalist land lords in the irrigated region is amply vindicated and substantiated by our class wise primary survey data which we have generated during the second round of our field work. We have limited our survey to land ownership and class/caste relations. The rest of the aspects of the thesis are discussed below.

1. State Intervention in the Agrarian Structure

We have attempted to study basically two aspects of the state intervention i.e., two state policies a) policy of land reforms b) policy of rural development programmes. Interesting point is that the state intervention does not end here. There are other major and important aspects as well. We turn to the other aspects after discussing the impact of land reforms and rural development programmes. The impact of land reforms on the land ownership patterns is dismal. The land distributed in the four villages is 17 acres in Somaram, 0.5 acres in Prajapalle, 12.25 acres in Yadpalle and 2 acres in Gudur. These are the statistics provided by the Patwaris from village land revenue records. Though the change affected by land reforms is dismal there were certain unintended consequences as well. The landlords have, particularly in the irrigated region, divided holdings in the names of all the family members, including in the names of married off daughters, and saw to it that the holdings are lesser than what would come under the land ceiling act. In
both unirrigated and irrigated regions besides ‘paper partitions’ there was also some sale of lands anticipating the Land Ceiling Act. In spite of the evasions, paper partitions etc, or probably because of them, there is still considerable land concentration both in unirrigated region and in irrigated region. There is a strong case for another round of rigorous land reforms in the district.

The second aspect of the state-intervention that we have attempted to study was regarding the rural development programmes. As said earlier the data on these programmes at the village level is not available. Attempts were made at the level of the Mandal Development Offices and at the level of DRDA (District Rural Development Agency) office to collect data for the study villages; but it was all in vain. Neither the Mandal Development Offices nor the DRDA office stored data for the period 1960-90. DRDA office has computers but even in them the information is available only barely for the period starting in 1995. But basing on the fieldwork some observations can be made on the implementation of rural development programmes. They are as follow: a) The state has attempted to implement some rural development programmes. b) Getting access to the programmes always required political patronage. Those who had patronage got the programmes easily. Political leaders used these programmes for their own leverage and often saw to it that their clients got benefitted.

a) Those who have got benefitted from the rural development programmes either in the form of monetary assistance or in the form of assets (e.g. Milch cattle etc.) have not turned them into sustainable economic assets and therewith into sustainable economic activity. Most often the monetary assistance was used for consumption purposes rather than for productive purposes.

b) The beneficiaries have most often not paid back the subsidised loans provided by Banks to them. Consequently, it is not only the individual beneficiaries but entire villages (i.e., the entire ‘target groups’ of the villages) have lost their credit worthiness and following which the Banks are not ready to finance any programmes further. In our sample this is particularly the case with the village Yadpalle.

Rural development programmes such as heavy loans for tractors have been provided in the research villages particularly in the command area i.e., irrigated area. These always required collateral. Often land was required to be put as collateral. As stipulated by the NABARD (National Bank for Agricultural and Rural Development) the local ADBs (Agricultural Development Banks) sought for either 25 acres of single-cropped land or 12...

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76 Daniel and Alice Thorner first used the term saying, “in a number of states legislation was proposed or enacted to set a limit (a ‘ceiling’) on the size of holdings. To fore stall such ‘ceilings’ land lords nominally divided their property among their relations or friends so that each of the newly created holdings fell below the proposed maximum. For this process the disappointed tenants coined the expression, ‘paper partitions’.” Daniel and Alice Thorner, ‘Emergence of an Indian Economy, 1760-1960’ in Daniel and Alice Thorner, *Land and Labour in India*, (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1962) pp.62-63. This term ‘paper partitions’ is also used by Andre Beteille for describing benami partitions in Andre Beteille, *Caste, Class and Power : Changing Patterns of Stratification in a Tanjore Village*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996)

77 The upper caste/class landowners have generally maintained their credit worthiness, often using the low interest bank loans for various purposes, including money lending.
acres of double-cropped land as collateral requirement. Some of the enterprising landlords have taken these loans, bought tractors and used them both for strengthening their farms and for hiring out. Thus these loans which are meant for the upper strata of the land owning structure have strengthened the economic position of the individual landowners.

c) Though the entire process of tractorization in the irrigated area can not be attributed to the Banks’ finance schemes, certainly the subsidised loans have played crucial role.

d) Thus the rural development programmes had marginal impact on the lower rungs of the agrarian structure. Their impact in bolstering up the small and middle peasantry is not significant. On the other hand the subsidised loans have contributed to the increase in rural inequalities via tractorisation/mechanisation. This happened particularly in irrigated region.

As mentioned above, the state intervention in rural sector does not end with land reforms and rural development programmes alone. Even in the economic sphere, the state policies, such as irrigation, have brought forth tremendous changes in the agrarian scenario. The political policy of the state intervention is the periodic conducting of Panchayati Raj elections. In India not all states have conducted Gram Panchayat polls. But Andhra Pradesh is among those states in which Panchayati Raj elections have been held regularly. This aspect of the state intervention has great impact on the village and mandal level politics; grassroots politics in general. Thereby this aspect of state intervention has also significant impact on the distribution of power and political resources at the grassroots level. Below we discuss the impact of these two processes: irrigation: state economic policy; and regular Panchayati Raj elections: state political policy, on agrarian change and grassroots politics of the villages studied.

The Nehruvian policy of promoting productive forces and modernising agricultural through big dams (‘temples of modern India’) led to the expansion of irrigation in selected parts of the country. The Nagarjuna Sagar Project, built on Krishna river, was one such project and it had some impact on a part of the study district. Promoting irrigation was a conscious policy of the state. We have studied two villages in the irrigated zone of the Nalgonda district (Yadpalle, Gudur). In both the villages the most obvious process over the period 1960-90 was the emergence of economically strong capitalist-landlords. Here the agrarian structure preceding the advent of irrigation was an iniquitous one and irrigation has deepened the inequalities. Irrigation combined with ‘green revolution’ (another, more diffused form of state intervention) led to mechanisation more specifically tractorisation; cash tenancies; and inflow of migrant labour. These processes in their net result have significantly contributed to the increasing strength of landlords. The landlords have benefited because irrigation along with Borlaug package and tractors led to rapid commercialisation; and a section of the dominant landlords were favourably disposed by the pre-existing land ownership pattern to take full advantage of the process. True, irrigation has also helped strengthening of small and middle peasants, but the commercialisation process – which resulted from irrigation – drew them into the vortex of the market and made them vulnerable to its fluctuations. Though market penetrated increasingly into the middle and small peasant agriculture one should add here that certainly, despite market penetration, irrigation has greatly contributed to the persistence of the small and middle peasantry. Thus as we
made clear earlier the process observed here was one that of increasing inequalities (polarisation) among different classes of land owners as well as persistence of small and marginal peasants. It appears contradictory to say that there was both increase in inequality and persistence of small and marginal peasants. The situation in irrigated areas is so because irrigation as a productive force is a scale neutral productive force. Being a scale neutral productive force irrigation benefits both the upper strata of agrarian social structure as well as small and marginal peasants. The same is observed for western Uttar Pradesh in the study of the village Palanpur. The above process was also strengthened by the fact some of the upper caste landlords sold their lands off to small and middle peasants of backward castes. The latter is particularly found in the irrigated village Gudur. Therefore it is consistent that inequalities between peasant classes increase while small and middle peasantry persists. Increase in polarization here appears in the intensification of capital intensity of large owners and continued but subdued persistence of lower rungs of peasantry.

Here the development of capitalism in agriculture did not transform the middle, small and marginal peasants into pure agricultural labourers. Thus the two villages studied in the command area have shown that drastic changes were brought about by the impact of irrigation. Social relations i.e., production relations, too in this area have changed towards that of more capitalistic nature. Increase in labour demand resulted in better wages for local labour and resulted in inflow of migrant labour.

Turning to the political policy of the state intervention i.e., periodic holding of Panchayati Raj elections we see that Andhra Pradesh is one of those states wherein Panchayati Raj system is relatively in a functioning state. Elections for Panchayati Raj institutions were held periodically. Between 1959 and 1990 i.e., from shortly after the formation of the state till 1990, the Gram Panchayat election were held five times; in 1995 it was the sixth time. We have argued that this form of state intervention, interalia, had significant implications for the evolution of the grassroots politics. The periodic exposure to polls has made the lower castes and lower classes, which are numerous, realise the strength of their numbers. Thus as we discussed in the case studies, the realisation of the numerical strength, along with the newly introduced electoral reservations, has led to the political emergence of the subordinate castes. This has happened to a greater extent with regard to the backward castes; though it has also happened in the case of scheduled castes. The impact of electoral reservations is weakest vis-à-vis women. Even when a particular seat was reserved for women, women on their own have not mobilised, canvassed, or won or lost, in terms of gender.

But returning to the basic point, it needs to be said that the emergence of the backward castes as mentioned earlier does not owe singularly to the state intervention. State intervention has made the political emergence of the backward/Scheduled castes and tribes, easier. But the ground is prepared by other factors too. These are factors such as the popular memory of the shared past, of struggles with dominant castes – in our case particularly of the Telengana armed struggle – and, the awareness spread in the present by the leftist political organisations, of various shades, in the near and far. Indeed the criticism of weapons, wielded by non-parliamentary left parties in the adjacent districts,

78 P.Lanjouw and N.Stern (eds), Economic Development in Palanpur Over Five Decades (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998).
is audible and heard in a loud manner. Thus the emergence of the subordinate castes is partly owing to the state intervention in terms of regular elections and electoral reservations and partly owing to the politico–historical factors. Thus, in this case, only partial credit can be given to the state. Another paradoxical aspect of the state intervention should be mentioned here. The political emergence of the backward castes was found in more emphatic manner in the dry, semi-irrigated and un-irrigated villages/region than in the irrigated villages/region. In irrigated villages the subordinate castes attempted to assert their power with or without the presence of the left parties, whereas in the irrigated villages the successful political emergence of the subordinate castes/tribes required the active campaigning and support of the left parties. The difference is because the state intervention in terms of irrigation strengthened dominant castes in the irrigated region; there with their resistance to the upcoming castes.

In the unirrigated region the strength of dominant castes, between 1960 and 1990, relatively declined owing to the pressures created by the larger society, polity and economy. Though they still command some economic power the socio-political dominance has declined. Since the state has not developed the infrastructure in terms of interventions such as development of irrigation, the commercialisation is not rapid, there is no tractorisation, and consequently overtime, the landlords have not become as strong as they are in the irrigated region. This made the political assertion of the subordinate castes easier, and real, the opportunities being provided by the state. Whereas in the irrigated region the political assertion of the subordinate castes faces stiff resistance, manipulation, manoeuvring of the landlords; and it also necessitates more active role on the part of the leftist parties in favour of the lower castes. In the end, one should reiterate, that despite all odds, political intervention of the state in terms of electoral reservations has brought about backward caste, Scheduled caste and Scheduled tribe individuals, men and women, into the formal command of the grassroots political institutions; particularly at the village and mandal levels. Thus by 1996 in Ramannapet Mandal (unirrigated region) 19 out of the 20 villages had backward/Scheduled caste Sarpanches and the Mandal President was from a backward caste (Peraka). Likewise in Miryalguda mandal (irrigated region) out of 23 villages 19 had backward caste/Scheduled caste and Scheduled tribe Sarpanches. The Mandal President was a woman from the local Scheduled tribe (Lambada). The same is the case with Devarakonda Mandal (drought prone region) where by 1996 out of 22 villages 19 had backward caste, Scheduled caste and Scheduled tribe Sarpanches and Mandal President was from the local Scheduled tribe (Lambada).

Here some comparison may be made about the emergence of the backward castes in other states of India. In Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu the backward castes assertion for power is long established and is product of anti-caste, anti-Brahmin movements. These have started prior to independence and continue to the present. Anti-caste movements in Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu were socio-political movements of great influence. While
in the northern states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar the backward castes catapulted into prominence owing to a combination of factors such as the long established tradition of anti-congressism, the impact of Zamindari abolition, and the impact of ‘green revolution’.

The political assertion of backward castes has gone on to much greater extent in these two northern states (UP and Bihar) than in any other part of the country. Here the political assertion is not only at the level of grassroots politics but at the state assembly level and through that even on national politics. In comparison with the above the situation that we are describing in Andhra Pradesh is a much more limited one. Here the emergence of subordinate castes is not owing to any socio-political movement, as it is in the case of Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu, nor is it owing to any other larger political forces. In Andhra Pradesh the assembly level politics are still fiercely dominated by upper castes (Kammans and Reddys). It is only recently and that too at the level of the grassroots institutions that we find the emergence of subordinate castes. Now we turn to another comparison.

Arvind N. Das writing about a village in North Bihar recently implied two things regarding state intervention in the country side. One, that the rural elections in total are farce and practices such as booth capturing are rule rather than exception; two, the state intervention in terms of extending infrastructure such as electrification is absolutely ineffective. Experience of this author is different. Booth capturing in the villages studied has not been a normal practice and rather was exceptional. Rural elections are far from being a farce. And Das also says about the village ‘Changel’ that the electric poles are erected but electricity is never supplied so that the villagers always have no depend on alternative sources of energy all the time. Such a scenario does not appear to be prevailing in the villages studied in this thesis. True, there are power cuts for long periods in the day, but by evening one observes electric lamp glowing in every hut! We have in fact observed that in the dry, un-irrigated part of the district, electrified motors, pump sets and tube wells play a fundamental role in the agriculture. Even in the village irrigated by canal water we observed that the number of electric pump sets was around 90 (Yadpalle). In the above said aspects state intervention in A.P. in general and our study

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80 One scholar wrote about the situation of backward caste politics in UP and Bihar in the following manner: “The determination of the backward castes to seize power together with the internal contradictions and struggles within their alliance system has thrown the politics of the entire northern region into turmoil. For while Yadavas rebel against Jats, Kurmis challenge Yadavas, and Lower Shudras turn against Upper Shudras, the backward castes as a whole refuse to align with any set-up that does not concede them total supremacy. Though not coherent enough to capture power on their own, they are powerful enough to prevent others from forming a rival stable order. Meenakshi Jain, “Backward castes and social change in UP and Bihar” in M.N.Srinivas, (ed. & intro.) Caste: It’s Twentieth Century Avatar, (New Delhi: Viking, Penguin Books India (P) Ltd, 1996), PP. 135-151.

villages in particular compares definitely favourably, with the portrayal by Das of Bihar, indeed.  

2. Spread of Commercialisation  
We have taken commercialisation as the second aspect of study. By commercialisation we meant basically a) growth of land market b) growth of labour market. We have not collected strict economic data on these matters. The observations made are based on the field work and are as follow:  
There developed between 1960-90 active land and labour markets in all the villages studied. Informal credit has declined and institutional credit has increased. Institutional credit today forms 70% of the rural credit. The growth of land and labour markets is more directly visible in irrigated areas than in the non-irrigated areas. The land prices in unirrigated villages went up from those that of below rupees hundred per acre to Rs. 30,000 to 40,000 per acre, between 1960 and 1990. The land prices in irrigated villages have escalated from around Rs. 100 in 1960 to Rs. 1, 50,000 in 1996.  
Market penetration enabled only those classes/castes that are capable of withstanding its fluctuations and vagaries, and accumulate capital. Those who can not manage intensive cultivation and commercialization have declined. This applies particularly to the Velama and Brahmin caste landlords of irrigated region. Exposure to market has also strengthened those castes of middle and small peasantry who are hard working and capable of avoiding as much hired labour as possible. But still one should mention here that middle and small peasantry has been increasingly affected by the fluctuations of market prices eg. Increase in the prices of fertilisers, fluctuations in the prices of final produce etc. And its economic activity is increasingly dependent on the growth of land rents, wages and the nature of the terms of trade with the urban market. But despite these difficulties the middle and small peasantry, which also consists of major chunk of backward castes has been sturdily facing the marketisation and commercialisation. Backward caste peasantry, particularly in the unirrigated areas has not only stood up to the market, but also turned it to its advantage. This needs some qualification and restatement.  
It is observed during the fieldwork that not all backward castes are in a position to buy lands from the upper castes. In the village Somaram it was observed that backward castes are class divided and it is the upper layer of the backward castes to which land shifted from traditional upper castes (Reddys). Some of the backward caste middle peasants too have purchased lands from upper castes both in Somaram and Prajapalle. How do we explain this? This can be explained by the fact that the backward castes while aspiring to become landowners have always retained the support of traditional caste occupations. In Somaram the backward caste Padmashalis have bought lands largely on the profits they made on their weaving occupation. In Parajapalle the Yadavas bought lands from upper caste while retaining their traditional occupation, sheep grazing. Likewise the toddy tappers purchase (or, in irrigated region, rent in) lands while retaining their traditional caste occupation: toddy tapping. While the better off members of backward caste bought lands in larger scale (eg. as in Somaram), the backward caste middle and small peasants bought lands on moderate scale. Thus while speaking of land transfers it appears to be necessary to take into account two factors: a) the class differentiation among the backward castes b) The extent of support, financial and social, that they could obtain from their traditional caste occupations.
It is also observed during the fieldwork that the family farms of the middle, small and marginal peasants have shown great resilience to the market forces. Here this point requires the consideration of the cropping pattern. Firstly, in the unirrigated region the tendency of the middle and small peasants is to grow paddy even on small plots irrigated under tube wells and electrified wells. The aspiration is always to turn the dry land into wet land. This emphasis on paddy cultivation appears to be because paddy cultivation reduces the impact of market fluctuations on the peasants, particularly *vis a vis* food security. It appears that, provided water, paddy is a relatively stable crop; both in terms of yields and prices. What applies to paddy cultivation in unirrigated region also applies, in more than one sense, to the paddy cultivation in the irrigated region. Green revolution in paddy is different from Green revolution in crops such as cotton, chilly, groundnut and turmeric. In the case of the latter commercial crops both the yields and prices are prone to drastic fluctuations and the life of the peasants growing them is always precarious and volatile. Whereas paddy cultivation appears to be relatively stable and consequently the situation of the middle, a small and marginal peasant was not as volatile or on the verge of crisis.

Besides this another fact is also that the categories of the peasants mentioned above mostly employ family labour and reduce labour costs to the minimum. It is where they can not reduce labour costs eg. in the irrigated region, here the other factors such as increase in rents affected them badly. But despite all the odds, middle, small and even marginal peasants have shown tremendous resistance and persistence.

What affected family farms negatively are the aspects a) increasing land-rents, particularly in the irrigated region, and b) increasingly adverse terms of trade with the urban market. Firstly the land rents have been going up annually. We have also mentioned that there is a decisive shift during 1960-90 in the irrigated region, from sharecropping to fixed-grain rent. There is also significant trend towards fixed rent in cash. This shift worked negatively toward the tenanted family farms and small/marginal peasants. Secondly the prices of agricultural inputs such as fertilisers, pesticides, even of seed have been increasing at a rate more than the rate of increase in the price of agricultural produce.

The growth of market in labour is more visible and conspicuous in the irrigated region than in the unirrigated region; though even in the unirrigated region the market in labour exists. In the villages studied in the unirrigated region we have found that rural labour consisting of backward castes and scheduled castes is shifting from agricultural labour to activities such as weaving (specifically in case of Somaram). Even in agriculture casual labour is preferred over attached labour. One practice of semi-attached labour observed in both un-irrigated and irrigated regions is the prevalence of the *Jeetham* (annual farm servant) labour. But even in this there is no bondage relation. Annual farm servant is contracted for a year and when the one-year term expires he is free to choose another master. Some times a loan is advanced to annual contract labourer on 2% interest and even this loan does not tie him up to only one master in the form of bondage. The wage, or salary of an annual farm servant, varies between Rs. 6000 to Rs. 10,000 per annum.

Another important and most conspicuous aspect of the growth of labour market is the prevalence of migrant labour in the irrigated region. The migrant labour goes to irrigated region from the un-irrigated region. Consequently there is out-migration in the unirrigated region and inflow of labour in the irrigated region. The inflow of migrant
labour in the irrigated region is not because landlords want to suppress local labour. Here we differ with Jan Breman. Breman says that in South Gujarat landlords brought in migrant labour because it is cheap, docile and counteracts the growth in local wages. Consequently there is an antagonistic relationship between local labour and migrant labour. This scholar does not agree that such a situation can be extrapolated to the region under study. In our study villages (Yadpalle and Gudur) in the irrigated region, we have found that migrant labour does not pose any threat to local labour, nor do landlords bring in migrant labour in an organised way in order to suppress local labour. Migrant labour comes into irrigated area basically because of the lack of work opportunities, and droughts and subsistence crisis in its original regions and because there is a tremendous demand, consequent to the green revolution, in the irrigated region. Though migrant labour is paid in grain rather than in cash, which it prefers, the prevalence of migrant labour clearly points to the growth in labour market. It also points to the commodification of labour.

Commercialisation of agriculture had considerable impact on the agrarian structure. In the irrigated region the landlords had swiftly adopted themselves to commercialisation and intensification of the agriculture and therefore have retained their holdings to a large extent. But those landowners who could not stand up to commercialisation both in irrigated and unirrigated areas have dispensed with the lands. There is significant deconcentration of land ownership between 1960-90 in both irrigated and unirrigated areas. In irrigated areas family partitioning has contributed to the deconcentration process, whereas in the unirrigated region family partitioning combined with social reasons, such as heavy dowries and pressures created by the larger polity, society and economy have contributed to the process of deconcentration.

The lands which are sold by the upper castes were bought, to a large extent, by the backward castes. As mentioned earlier, in addition to the support of traditional caste occupation the backward castes employ family labour to a great extent and reduce farming costs to minimum. This enables them to withstand the commercialization process.

3. Political Movement From Below

In the district under study, the only political movements that we could observe were of the CPI and CPI (M). These two communist parties have been winning the Loksabha and state assembly elections. These are faced with stiff competition in their electoral pursuits from the Congress (I) and Telugu Desam party. These political parties have however had little impact whatsoever on the agrarian structures of the district. These parties not even had any significant impact on the rural wages. The only positive contribution they have made to the grassroots politics is that they have helped to emerge backward and scheduled castes/tribes in the irrigated region. They have also helped the backward castes consolidate their position in the unirrigated region. However much they help backward castes at the grassroots level, they give their party tickets largely to upper caste candidates when it comes to assembly and parliamentary elections; that too mostly to Reddys. Presently the CPI (M) at local level is split on this issue. In electoral politics the CPI and CPI (M) have generally worked in association with the TDP, together with which they contributed to the strengthening of the social base of the National front. But
as we have seen in the case of Somaram, even the National Front politics allowed to a large extent only the upper class backward caste members to come to power at the grassroots. This of course is offset by our observation on the village Gudur that backward castes, even after electoral reservation, could not have effectively come to power (i.e., not only de jure but also de facto), had the CPI (M) local branch not actively canvassed for its candidates. But this is the limit of the CPI and CPI (M) politics. Their struggles for the improvement of wages are marginal and their struggles for the implementation of land reforms or bringing down the ceiling limit on land ownership are ineffective. Their own activists accept this very much.

In the final analysis what is the impact of the aspects: a) the state intervention b) commercialisation and c) political movements from below? Has the polarisation been complete or incomplete? Was there a shift to capitalist agriculture? Our basic contention is that both state (political) intervention and commercialisation have led to the emergence of backward castes in the unirrigated region. The same twin processes state intervention and commercialisation in different form i.e., mainly economic form have led to the emergence of capitalist landlords in the irrigated region. The role of the political movements from below was marginal in both the regions. While coming to the drought prone region it is neither of these aspects, which had much impact. The drought prone region reeks under adverse ecological conditions and it is these ecological condition which make the area a labour reserve causing pauperisation. We consider these aspects in greater detail below.

In the unirrigated region the state intervention in terms of developing infrastructure was minimal. The only step state took in terms of infrastructure was to provide electricity. As we noted in the case studies rural electrification has, along with aspects such as moderate green revolution, supported the small and middle peasants. Electrified wells and tube wells are now common sight particularly in the unirrigated region. Beyond this the intervention of the state was minimal regarding the agricultural economy of the unirrigated region. In the same region the state intervention in terms of holding periodic Panchayat Raj elections has contributed to the political emergence of the backward castes. Relative economic strengthening of backward castes and downslide of upper castes was also observable in land transfers. Here, in the unirrigated region upper castes declined relatively because they failed to modernise their productive forces. And state too has not provided nor improved infrastructure e.g., irrigation. Whereas in the irrigated region a) the state has provided irrigation b) the landlords have modernised their productive forces e.g., tractorisation. That is why we observe relative decline of upper caste landlords in the unirrigated region and strengthening of upper caste landlords in the irrigated region. There was no tendency towards homogenisation or peasantisation--or levelling--of agrarian structure; but there was surely and definitely a process of deconcentration of land ownership at work. This coincides with the observations earlier made on the secondary data.

In the irrigated region state intervention in terms of providing assured water supply, along with electricity, has led to the strengthening of landlords. It is true that all classes of peasants benefited from canal water, and peasant farming did strengthen too, but the landlords benefited more because the land ownership pattern preceding the advent of water enabled them to do so. The inequalities in the agrarian structure continued and got reinforced. This, in spite of the fact that even in the irrigated areas, there was the process
of deconcentration observable. Here landlords increased the capital intensity of their farms, not the land under their control. With the profits they have made on the land they are not buying some more land but they are buying tractors. Considerable amount of capital is also going into the acquisition of urban properties and businesses. During the fieldwork some landlords were even heard speaking of the necessity of acquisition of combine harvesters.

Commercialisation process, in both the regions, has contributed to the process of development of capitalist tendencies. The process was more clearly observable in the irrigated region than in the unirrigated region. Political movement from below have contributed to the spirit of challenge from subordinate castes towards upper castes. The socio-political hegemony of the landlords is increasingly under question. In both unirrigated and irrigated regions there is shift in clear terms towards capitalist production relations. The extra-economic obligations (if not coercion) such as vetti i.e., free labour service, have disappeared. Such practices have disappeared by mid-seventies itself. At the economic plane the landlords use free labour and are absolutely rational, calculating their activity to the last pie. But the development of these capitalist relations, particularly indicated by the development of free wage labour, is not generalizable for the whole district. There are regional diversities.

Both in the unirrigated and irrigated regions the social relations at the level of the production are capitalist. But the general social relations at the level of everyday interaction are still semi-feudal. At the level of the ‘base’ the social relations have, over the period 1960-1990, become more and more capitalistic; but at the level of the ‘superstructure’ the social relations are definitely pre-capitalist or even semi-feudal. Here we should add that in the agrarian sector, change occurs first at the level of production relations, because that is where the economic interests of classes are involved. Change in politics and ideology only comes later. ‘Superstructure’ certainly lags behind the ‘base’. It appears that in fact classes become conscious of class interests at the economic plane first. That is why in the rural sector tenants and labourers first become conscious of their interests at the level of production relations e.g., while bargaining with landlords, while quarrelling with their ‘mestris’ etc. They become conscious of systematic political organisation in terms of their political interests much later. The change in ideology, e.g., caste ideology, comes even later. Change at the level of the ideology and struggle at the level of the ideology and every day life are the ultimate changes to come about in rural class relations. We can here say with the help of our field experience that the village in which there is a high level of struggle over every day life and behaviour is a village in which consciousness of subordinate classes/castes is relatively high. It is not always true that people realise their interests first in ideology and only then apply that to production relations. On the contrary it is in production relations that the people realise their class interests and then attempt to change the ideology or ideologies that conform to those relations. That is why we see the phenomenon of relatively advanced class relations (i.e., capitalist relations) prevailing at the economic level and relatively backward class relations prevailing at the level of politics, ideology and everyday life. Coming to the grassroots politics (taken at the village and mandal levels) it was observed that the relative strength of different classes/castes matters greatly. This is even vis-à-vis wielding of power through the formal liberal democratic institutions. In our case the emergence of backward castes in the unirrigated region is facilitated not only by the
electoral reservations but also by the fact that the upper castes’ (consisting of erstwhile semi-feudal class) strength has relatively declined over time. In the irrigated region, on the other hand, the landlords have strengthened their economic position and made the emergence of the subordinate castes relatively difficult and the latter required active intervention of the parliamentary left parties. But here one should make it clear that the conflict and contest between the erstwhile semi-feudal class/castes and the subordinate castes for power is only limited to the village and mandal level politics. At the assembly (state) and parliament (national) level politics this contest does not operate much and even the CPI and CPI(M) parties field upper caste candidates themselves or support them in some form of alliance with other parties. Currently the CPI(M) in Nalgonda district is split precisely over this issue and the splinter group calls itself ‘CPM’ and specifically demands that party tickets to Loksabha and state assembly elections be given to lower caste candidates. Thus a stiff resistance to dominant castes even at the Loksabha and assembly level politics is emerging. Not only this, the CPI(M) in the district also faces challenges from grassroots movements such as Jala Sadhana Samiti. The Jala Sadhana Samiti (JSS) has been struggling for water for the district since a decade. It is a non-party organisation. It has besides ‘dharnas’ and ‘rasta rokos’, taken to unique methods of protest such as filing record level of 400 and above nominations in parliamentary elections to one seat just in order to draw attention. Enormous amount of pressure is built by the JSS on the state to provide irrigation to the district. There is a contest for political space in this regard. The parliamentary left parties and other political parties see the movement as encroaching into their constituencies. Consequently they too have started championing the issue of water and irrigation in their own way. Of late they have started one ‘Pending Projects Sadhana Samiti’. They have started this ‘Pending Projects Sadhana Samiti’ precisely not to let the JSS take away the credit for organising on issues of water and irrigation. Thus interestingly certain form of mediation between grassroots initiatives and party processes has begun. Whereby institutionalised political parties are coming to grips with and trying to channelise the issues raised by grassroots movements. But, however, they lag very much behind in this process and the rhetoric is not matched by practice. The state response on the other hand to these initiatives is nothing other than stony silence. The demand for SLBC (Srisailam Left Bank Canal) project is often ignored by the state government. In fact the state government tries its best to club all the non-party initiatives with the Naxalite movement and thereby tries to delegitimize them. The activists of the JSS have been struggling consciously against this process. Thus the people’s movements in the district are presently faced with a co-opting party system (which primarily attempts to co-opt issues though not leaders) and an unresponsive state. The state has limited its positive response to carrying out periodic elections and sending grassroots people to polls as many times as possible. In the context of the threat of Naxalite movement which calls for boycott of elections, the response of the state was to attempts to instil faith in the democratic process by sending people as many times as possible to polls. While this certainly makes people conscious of the importance of the political process it does not necessarily increase faith in the liberal democratic system.

The belief in the functioning of the system is possible only when the democratic system delivers goods i.e., only when it really improves the conditions of existence and quality of life of the masses.

In the context of above presented scenario one can say that the political structure and rural (grassroots) representative institutions can be democratised over a period of time through state intervention in terms of holding periodic elections and implementing electoral reservations. But genuine democratisation of the rural society is possible only when economic and social structure i.e., land ownership pattern and caste structure, are democratised. This requires the efforts of the state as well as socio-political movements. The state particularly should carry out more rigorous land reforms reducing the ceiling limit on land ownership. But since the Indian state is increasingly turning its back to land reforms it falls more on the part of the socio-political movements to both pressurise the state to implement meaningful/effective land reforms and to carry out on their very own struggle against caste structures and inequalities. Even multiplicity of social movements each focussing separately on land, caste, ecology, gender and development issues is welcome. It is these struggles rather than the generosity of the state that matter.

What is said above is all the more important in the context of Nalgonda district where even drinking water is a problem. Nearly 500 villages in the district are affected by fluorosis because the water they drink contains hazardous levels of fluorine content in it. This includes even the District head quarter i.e., the Nalgonda town. Many people and children in particular are affected by fluorine causing orthopaedic, dental and other health disorders.

Besides drinking water, water for irrigation is also prominently lacking in the district. Major grassroots movements as mentioned earlier have been going on in the district for water. The Jala Sadhana Samiti (JSS) movement, which began in the mid eighties, has been struggling for water to the district. Water for irrigation and water for drinking purpose is nowhere as political an issue in Telengana as it is in Nalgonda. The future of the agrarian political economy of the district crucially depends on the success or failure of these struggles; and therewith, the well being of its people.