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STUDY ON POPULAR PROTESTS AND SOCIAL STRUCTURES

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Abstract: The official documentation deploys terms like Fituri, Hool, Ding, Ulgulan and Vidroha to describe varied uprisings which were dubbed mainly as law and order problems. However recent researches have shown that these terms denoted popular uprisings against colonial exploitation. These were led by peasants and tribals who were not monolithic entities. The differentiation within peasants and tribals indicated that they were parts of existing social structures and during time of protest, they were as much helped by other poor classes.
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Introduction:

Fifty years ago, sociologists considered protest to be an undemocratic intrusion into politics. In the wake of the movements of the 1960s, protest is now seen as an important adjunct to democratic polities and a significant factor in the transition from authoritarian to democratic regimes. The study of protest and social movements has mushroomed from a marginalized and almost-dying sub-specialty of social psychology in the 1960s to a large specialty area of sociology in its own right with significant ties to political, organizational, and cultural sociology as well as to social psychology. Social movements theorists see protest as "politics by other means," and it is now well recognized that extra-institutional and institutional politics are intertwined and interdependent. Since the 1970s, scholars of social movements have developed a productive body of theory and research around the interrelated theoretical orientations generally labeled resource mobilization, political process, and framing theories. There are excellent reviews available of these theoretical traditions (e.g. Benford & Snow, 2000; McAdam, McCarthy, & Zald, 1996) and we cannot do justice to them here. Instead, our agenda is forward-looking, seeking to pick up several key trends in the study of social movements that we believe should be important in the coming decades. All involve transcending old categories and boundaries and all combine methodological and theoretical advances. Partisans view some of these trends as coming from theoretically incompatible standpoints, but we do not. Instead, we see them as addressing different important features of a complex reality. The field of social movements is broad, and no article of this length can possibly do justice to every significant trend. Even with our restricted scope, we have had to cut significant material to meet the word limits of this piece. In particular, we had to drop 50% of our original references, which would have placed the trends we identify in broader context and provided more empirical examples. Despite these limits, we are confident that the trends we highlight are among the most important. We treat the first two trends more briefly, and the other two in more detail. The first trend is that the case base underlying mainstream social movements theory is expanding beyond the reform movements of Anglo-American and Western Europe. Regionally, "general" theories are beginning to take account of Eastern Europe, Latin America, Asia, and Africa. Substantively, ethnic conflict, democratization movements, and revolutions have been added to social reform movements as central topics of concern, and concepts of regime-movement relationships and the organization of protest have been broadened to encompass authoritarian regimes and the complex dependency relations of nations in the world economy.

Numerous works exist on the agrarian and social history of precolonial and colonial India. While the imperialist historiography has denied exploitation of India and has taken credit for bringing intellectual awakening in India, the nationalist historiography for a long time has only focused on Indian national movement. The role of congress leadership in mobilising peasants has been highlighted. However this has come under scrutiny. Within Marxian framework, agrarian society and economy has been

analysed within the context of mode of production. In the process social differentiation within peasantry has been also pointed out. However Shahid Amin in his study of 'Peasant Production' in colonial Uttar Pradesh has stressed the need to study process of production. In his assessment, only then the problems of peasants and nature of their subjectivity can be highlighted. Initially works like those of S.B. Choudhary also focussed on the role of peasantry in studying popular movements. However this lacuna has been removed. Social Anthropologists and Historians have focused on various tribal movements to indicate the nature of social structures that determined popular protests led by tribals. In this regard K.Suresh Singh has produced seminal works on the protest movement led by Birsa Munda. Ranajit Guha who has studied the popular aspects of peasant insurgency between 1783 and 1900 has provided an analytical framework. He has shown that official documentation was indicative of 'power-discourse'. The points out since most of rebels were illiterates they found their existence in official documentation within colonial perspective so only by deconstructing these documents voices of peasants can be found. He has argued that, as the rebel was conscious of starting revolt against dominant groups so he was an insurgent. However he found his identity at the level of dominant groups. That's why he possessed negative consciousness.

Ranajit Guha's work definitely helps in understanding social ties, intellectual and spiritual beliefs that went into the making of peasant revolts. Though historians have questioned his concept of negation and the categories of dominant and subaltern groups but it remains a fact that he has produced wealth of information on the nature of popular protests. The role of national movement, Mahatma Gandhi and Communist leadership in mobilizing people and coordinating anti imperialist movements has been highlighted in several works. Gyanendra Pandey and Kapil Kumar have analysed Kisan-Sabha movements in Northern India during 1920s. The autonomy of Kisan leaders like Baba Ramchandra and role of restrictive leaderships of congress in controlling peasant movements has been highlighted. Similarly the role of communist party in 1940s in leading popular protests against colonial and feudal exploitation has been highlighted.

Mridula Mukherjee in her study on the Punjab has shown the variegated social structures in rural areas, which provided the milieu for variegated protest movements against colonial regime. In recent years, there has been stress on the environmental history. Ramchandra Guha and Gadgil have argued that Marxian framework of mode of production does not take into account the exploitation of natural resources. They have focussed on 'modes of resource use' to point out how human beings either used natural resources rationally or exploited them on an unlimited scale. Both have argued there emerged 'ecosystem people', 'omnivores' and 'carnivores'. In 'This Fissured land', both have focused on colonial forestry to point out its role in dislocating 'ecosystem people'. Their work definitely helps in understanding the social economic position of tribal & non-tribal people who were at the subsistence level. Several historians and anthropologists have done the categorisation of various popular protests. Kathleen Gough has focused on restorative and trans formative movements. E.J.Hobbsbawn has deployed the concept of social banditry in studying pre-industrial Europe. He has differentiated between crime and revolt. Gough has also used this category. However Ranajit Guha has argued that while Hobsbawn has dubbed such protest as pre-political in pre-industrial Europe, however under colonial rule, aims and ideological basis of peasants revolts, though in nascent form were political in nature. K.Suresh Singh in his analysis has pointed out the changing nature of various protest movements. The presence of millennarian trends in popular uprisings has been studied by Stephen Fuchs in his 'Rebellious Prophet' the emergence of messianic leaders who emerged during times of ruptures between traditional and alien cultural norms has been highlighted by him.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A growing literature examines international and transnational movements and issue networks as well, with special emphasis on how these formations relate to and affect national politics and movements. Space does not permit a review of this work, but see Smith, Chatfield, and Pagnucco (1997), Keck and Sikkink (1998), or Guidry, Kennedy, and Zald (2000) for reviews. Until recently, there has been little sustained attempt to bring mainstream social movement theory into dialogue with experiences outside Anglo-America and Europe. Scholars of movements in other regions largely ignored or found wanting general social movement theory in addressing the movements of their regions, and "mainstream" theorists of social movements generally ignored other regions in formulating their theories. Even as late as the 1996, a major conference volume edited by McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald titled Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements treated only cases from the US and Europe (although there were a couple of Eastern European cases) and appeared not even to mention Africa, Latin America, or Asia. By contrast, McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly's (2001) most recent theoretical synthesis includes cases from Mexico, Kenya, the Philippines, India, and China in addition to those from Europe. While the body of work for Asia

and Africa has grown of late, the most sustained dialogue so far between "regional" studies and "mainstream" theory has centered on Latin American movements. Latin American universities have a long tradition of scholarship with respect to social movements and collective action in their own countries. Beginning in the late 1980s, several edited volumes critically juxtaposed Latin American traditions and those of US/European social movements theory, seeking to develop an understanding of popular protest that started with the Latin American experience (Eckstein, 1988; Escobar & Alvarez, 1992; Jaquette, 1989; Jelin, Zammit, & Thomson, 1990). The articles in these volumes address a broad and eclectic range of collective action topics including peasant and grassroots organizations, violence and revolutionary protest, women's organizations and their role in local community movements and broader identity issues, democratization, the role of the Catholic Church in mobilization, and the utility of the "new social movements" framework in Latin America. Subsequent Latin American work has engaged many of the major theoretical issues in the study of movements. Following trends elsewhere in the field, women/feminism/gender topics have become quite prominent in Latin American research. A number of these have focused on the conflicts within women's movements internationally and the prospects for bridging these gaps (Safa 1996; Ehrich 1998; Guy 1998). Some have engaged broader contemporary topics like feminism, identity, and democracy (Huiskamp 2000), gender and citizenship (Schild 1997), and how gender shapes political protest (Einwohner, et al, 2000), while others address much more localized problematics, like the role of women in the rise of urban movements (Massolo 1999). Recent work has also engaged important topics relating to culture, identity, and "new social movements" in the Latin American context. Projects have sought to link identity formation and its relationship to violence and citizenship (Schneider 2000), democratization and regime change (Huiskamp 2000), and class relations (Veltmeyer 1997). The relevance of social movements in the context of civil society is also a recurrent theme. Alvarez, Dagnino, and Escobar (1998) draw on contemporary civil society paradigms to argue that the rise in democratization in Latin America has not diminished the significance of social movements. At the same time, Beasley-Murray (1999) argues that the civil society paradigm does not adequately account for the rapid rise of religious fundamentalist movements in Latin America. Still others have argued that culture and civil society are essential dimensions for understanding increased regional integration as a product of neo-liberalism (Jelin 2001), and that mobilization in the Latin American context must be theorized by integrating "new social movement" concepts with more conventional resource and organizational elements (Mascott 1997, Zamorano Farias 1999). The contemporary work focusing on the unique mobilization experience of Latin America addresses a number of additional topics. The role of the Catholic Church in grassroots mobilization remains a topic of interest (Lopez Jimenez 1996), while the spread of evangelical and fundamentalist religious organizations throughout Latin America has received considerable attention, particularly with respect to how these relate to indigenous and community movements (Le Bot 1999; Canessa 2000) and their relation to social changes brought about by economic crises and neo-liberal policies (Misztal and Shupe 1998; Gill 1999). Other areas of focus have been land reform, peasant movements, and the unemployed (Larroa Torres 1997; Kay 1998; Petras and Veltmeyer 2001), the convergence of environmental awareness and social mobilization (Stonich and Bailey 2000; Dwivedi 2001), urban movements and community/neighborhood organization (Ellner 1999; Fernandez Soriano 1999), the transnationalization of mobilization (Mato 2000; Stonich and Bailey 2000), and regional integration and liberalization (Brysk and Wise 1997; Jelin 2001).

DOMINANT FEATURES OF PRE-COLONIAL SOCIETY

Several researches have shown that pre colonial Indian society was not static. Though village was the basic unit of administration and social ties. India was mainly rural and was constituted by thousands of villages. However these were not 'little republic' as colonial administrators dubbed them to show that villages were static and self-dependent, having no linkages with larger 'political set-up'. The land revenue was the main source of income for the state. After the death of Aurangzeb in 1707, decline and disintegration of Mughal Empire was followed by the emergence of numerous successor states. During this period social structure was shaped by several elements. One of the most important elements was rooted in economic ties within village and between villages and urban centres. The political turmoil of the later eighteenth century left its mark on the countryside. In the Delhi region, semi-tribal groups like the Gujars and Jats extended their settlements from the upper doab, to the arable 'upland' plain. Their settled village communities depicted hierarchy of traditional rights over land. There were either 'primary' or 'secondary Zamindars'. Mostly there existed joint extended family management and partial ownership constituted the most common tenurial form. In Punjab, primary Zamindars were the cultivators.

The bhaichara communities of the Jats owned land collectively.

In the upper doab, primary land control rights were held by dominant castes that were elites in the society. The relationship between groups of dominant peasant castes and service and artisan castes were shaped by the Jajmani system. It centred on the organization of production and distribution around the institution of hereditary occupational castes. The nonagricultural castes were either granted fixed village produce in lieu of their services or small plots of land. The prevalence of caste system did not denote rigid divisionM.N.Srinivas has pointed out the process of upward mobility in several parts of India. Though service and occupational castes were free to sell their products within village or even outside, however there was a tendency towards a high degree of specialization. It resulted in close relationship between specific castes and occupations. The dagbar who made leather bags for holding Ghi and Sugar cane juice was socially and occupationally distinct from the Chamar manufacturing shoes, leather ropes and drumhead. The flexibility and mobility was evident in the fact that a very large proportion of the gentry in Bihar, both Hindu and Muslims, cultivated with their own hands. Brahmins were also farmers in the South. In the tribal regions like Bengal, land hitherto held by tribals was gradually being claimed by dominant castes. While some tribal groups were hunters and gatherers, others were engaged in shifting cultivation. There was dependence on forest and water bodies. In the western ghats of Maharashtra, villages were formed by two castes groups of the Kunbis and Gavlis. The former living in the lower valley practised paddy cultivation. The Gavlis living on the upper hill terrace kept large herds of buffaloes and cattle. There was interdependence between both groups for obtaining necessities of life. In the state of Karnataka, in a village Masur, British Gazetteers noted the existence of thirteen different endogamous groups.

Some of them were fishing communities, other were agriculturalists, horticulturalists and entertainers. There were no direct linkages between caste and class. Within a caste, social differentiation existed on the basis of status and power. Infact the relations of domination and subordination were governed by moral codes. The low castes were required to obey and respect dominant castes. Within the family, patriarchal domination caused the subordination of women. Kinship and sexual status was also marked by difference in speech. In his description of Malabar in the nineteenth century, Logan noted— 'The house itself is called by different names according to the occupant's caste. The house of a Pariah is a cheri, while the agrestic slave –the cheraman-lives in Chala'. In Gujarat a patidar youth was not allowed to initiate conversation in the company of his elders. In Orissa, a Bauri untouchable was not to speak to a high caste until spoken to. In parts of southern India, a servant would cover his mouth while receiving his master's command. The objects of wear also constituted status symbol. Umbrella and shoes were markers of high castes. In Gujarat, the so-called impure Mahars were not allowed to tuck up their loin cloths but had to trail it along the ground. Thus social differentiation was buttressed by customary and cultural norms. The religious groups enjoyed power in tribals regions. There was faith in superstitions and rituals sanctioned by dominant religions. There existed village deities and also symbols of nature. The role of education was limited. It was the religious beliefs, which shaped the ritual practices and belief systems of people.

COLONIAL RULE AND RUPTURES IN SOCIETY

It was the East India Company, which had come to India for trade. Taking advantage of local polity, it laid the foundation of colonial rule from Bengal in the eighth-century. Irfan Habib has divided colonial rule of British into three distinct phases from monopolistic trading rights, company shifted to the policy of free trade in the early nineteenth century. After 1813, British declared themselves to be the 'Paramount Power' in India. The colonial expansion lasted till 1856. After suppressing the revolt of 1857, British converted India into the direct colony of Britain. In the subsequent years, colonial domination was further entrenched. From the outset British evolved policies, which were meant to maximize their resources. The ideological basis of British rule rested upon the suppression of subject population. The advent of Christianity from eighteenth century was marked by the establishment of press, church, hospitals and orphanages. Alongside administrative structure was supported by the police and the army. The established colonial hegemony led to disaffection of different social groups.

The Dual System in Bengal (1765-1772) resulted in widespread famine claiming 1/3 of total population. The attempts of British to deprive locally influential Rajas, Zamindars and Military persons also caused tension. As land was the main source of income for the state so British focused on the land revenue system. For this purpose Cornwallis introduced the Permanent settlement in 1793 in Bengal. Bihar and Orissa. During the same period, Monroe introduced the Ryotwari system in Madras. In 1835, William Bentinck introduced the Mahalwari system in North Western Province.

It was further extended to Punjab. After annexing Punjab, in 1849, British introduced agrarian changes in the provinces. There was extensive canal

colonisation in western Punjab. These agrarian changes not only augmented the resources of state but also gave birth to colonial sociology. The colonial sociology encouraged land lordism. In canal colonies, supporters of Raj were given land, which led to settlement of Punjabis in western Punjab from central Punjab. Everywhere position of peasantry started declining. The penetration of market forces and connection with capitalism led to commercialisation of agriculture. However numerous studies have shown that it only led to decline and indebtedness of peasantry. In pre-colonial times also small peasants had to borrow from village's Banias. However in the existing network, peasants could not be evicted from their land. Under colonial rule, big merchants and Zamindars became the moneylenders. They used the legal system to deprive peasants of their land. The situation was worse in tribal regions where outsiders started settling as traders and moneylenders. In several places, tribal population could not understand the implication of established legal and administrative set up. There was hatred for outsiders or dikus as they were called.

The process of deindustrialisation further deprived peasants of their source of income. Numerous village industries declined. The artisans were reduced to the position of labourers. They had to leave their villages in search of work. Their living conditions in industrial belts like Calcutta, Bombay and Kanpur were miserable. In this way, there was decline and disintegration of traditional ties symbolised by the Jajmani System. As British declared themselves to be the owners of forest wealth, it directly affected the position of tribal communities which were dependent upon forest It was in 1865 that an Act was passed which declared claims of the state over the forests. It was followed by the enactment of the Indian Forest Act of 1878. Under this Act, control of state over the resources of forests increased. Very limited rights were given to traditional tribal communities. Thus, there was ban on the shifting cultivation. The tribals as per their customs were not allowed to hunt and they were assigned limited space for their animals. The extension of railways network further led to penetration of rich trading classes into the distant areas of India. The development of plantation economy not only led to degradation of environment but the 'rule of records' as formed by the ' British led to the undermining of traditional rights.

Subjected to exploitation, various castes and communities responded in multiple ways. The web of relationships that had existed since pre-colonial times were sustained in several parts of India. Those who had been deprived of power and authority gained support from common people. Thus displaced rulers had the support of local population. Within specific regions, tribal population reacted against exploitation. In several cases intertribal affinities were formed. The social religious reform movement in nineteenth century also had its bearing on small peasants, low caste groups and tribal population. There was influence of Christianity as well. There was affirmation of faith in specific belief systems. By late nineteenth century, as nationalism was evident in public domain and gradually it gave birth to mass nationalism, there was change also in the popular protest movements. While some retained their autonomy, others joined anti imperialist struggle.

KOL REVOLT

It erupted in some parts of Bihar in 1831-1832. Kols were agriculturalists. The growing land revenue and indebtedness caused socio-economic tension in the area. It was noted by British official Wilkinson that landlords and contractors had increased land revenue by 35%. There was resentment against the land revenue system as the British introduced it. The tension erupted when in 1831; twelve villages of Sinhari Manki in Sonpur were handed over to outsiders. They were reports about maltreatment being meted out to his sisters. It was also reported that one Munda women had been kidnapped in Singbhum. There was growing recognition that British policies had deprived Kols of their rights over land. It was against this exploitation that Kols of Sonpur, Tamar and Naundgoan were directed to assemble in Tamar. The decision was taken to avenge insult by indulging in acts of loot, killing and burning. They were also extended help by the Mundas. The revolt spread in Chotanagpur, Singhbhum and Palamau. Thus the revolt of Kols exhibited the tribal consciousness against exploitation. Their ability to unite their people and to secure help from other tribals residing in their vicinity was indicative of the fact that they were united in their protest against colonial exploiters .

SANTAL REVOLT

Santal revolt was characterised by class solidarity transcending ethnicity. There was not only well defined programme to resist exploitation but the leadership of Sido and Kanho was characterized by usage of spiritual codes to organise rebels. Before the outbreak, elaborate preparations were made. Both written and oral messages were used to solicit support. Above all, women also played an important role in the uprisings. The way this revolt started and spread over vast space showed that Santals were determined to combat their exploiters. Santals lived in Birbhum, Singbhum, Hazari Bagh, Bhagalpur and Munger.They were agricultualists .However the entrechment of land lordism, usage of legal machinery by money lenders subjected them to continuous exploitation. As per the

contemporary accounts of lawyer Degamber Chakravarty and Chhotre Dasmanj Santals failed to comprehend the exploitative nature of British administration. Initially they hoped that their grievances would be redressed by the British officials. However when it did not happen , Santals decided to rise in revolt. In leading Santals against growing exploitation, leadership was provided by Sido and Kanhu.They proclaimed divine sanction to lead the revolt. They issued parwanas containing their messages and directing local population to extend help to them. For it, they sought help from non tribal population like artisans and other service groups like the Dom , the Lohar and the Gwala. The defaulters were explicitly warned that they work loose their lives. Thus Sido and Kanhu exhorted their local populace to take up arms against exploiting money lender and British administrators. Thus one of the parwana sent by Sido and Kanho read, "the sahib and the white soldiers will fight. Kanoo and Seedoo manjee are not fighting. The thacoor himself will fight————— ——". They also observed, "The Mahajans have committed a great sin; The Sahibs and the amlah have made everything bad, in this the Sahibs have sinned greatly. Those who tell things to the magistrate and those who investigate cases for him, take 70 to 80 Rupees. with great oppression in this the Sahibs have sinned. On this account the Thacoor has ordered me saying that the country is not the Sahib". There were series of meetings in which tribal chiefs and local population outlined preparations for the revolt. It started in 1855 with series of dacoities in Bhagalpur, Birbhum and Bankure where Bengali landlords were attacked and their properties were looted. From the beginning looted goods were equally divided among rebels. There was participation of women in dacoities. There was appropriation of religions rituals practised by upper castes. For instance, Sido and Kanhu offered puja to Goddess Durga. For the performance of Puja , two Brahmins were abducted. It was also decided to march to Calcutta in order to present their grievances before the rulers. However brutal suppression by authorities who resorted to destruction of Santals villages and accumulated loot, led to weaking of the movement. Santals resorted to plundering for the purpose of sustaining themselves. However, eventually the army suppressed the revolt. There were arrests on large scale. Women were also arrested.

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