### Classification of Peasant Movements:

According to Ghanshyam Shah, in India peasant movements are generally classified into pre-British, British or colonial and post-independence. According to Oommen there are certain movements which con­tinue despite the changes in the political power.

These are the movements which started in the pre-independence era and are still continued though with different goals. The classification is also based on time span as the structure of agrarian system also differs from time to time so also the peasant movements.

A.R. Desai classified the colonial India into the following areas under the British rule as Ryotwari, the areas under the princely authority as Zamindari and tribal zones. A.R. Desai calls the move­ments as “peasant struggles” in the colonial period and those of post-independence era as “agrarian struggles”. The phrase “agrarian struggles” according to A.R. Desai refers not only to include peasants but also others.

He further divides the post-independence agrarian struggles into two categories—the movements launched by the newly emerging proprietary classes comprising rich farmers, viable sections of the middle peasant proprietors and the streamlined landlords; and second, the movements launched by various sections of the agrarian poor in which the agrarian proletariat have been acquiring central importance.

There are various classifications given by different scholars depending on the period and issues involved. Neither in the pre-independent nor post-independent India, there ever existed, a unified pattern of agrarian structure. Though in post-independent India there was a centralized political authority and a capitalist mode of production acting as driving forces, there has not yet evolved a unified agrarian pattern.

The capitalist mode of agriculture has developed in a few states such as Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Punjab. The classification also varies in accordance with the theoretical framework. Kathleen Gough classifies the peasant revolts into five categories.

**They are:**

i. Restorative rebellions to drive out the British and restore earlier rulers and social relations.

i. Religious movements for the liberation of a region or an ethnic group under a new form of government.

iii. Social banditry.

iv. Terrorist vengeance with the idea of meting out collective justice.

v. Mass insurrections for the redressal of particular grievances.

This classification is based on the apparent goals of the revolts rather than on the classes of the peasants involved and the strategies that they adopted for attaining their goals. However, it ignores some of the important peasant movements, which were linked to the nationalist movement in some form or the other.

Pushpendra Surana classifies peasant movements into eight types, mainly based on issues such as the movements against forced cultivation of a particular type of crop, exploitation by moneylenders, price rise, outside invaders, and dynasties. The limitation of such a classification is obvious, as more than one issue is often involved in many revolts.

Ranajit Guha looks at the peasant movements in a different way. He examines peasant insurgency from the perspective of peasant consciousness for revolt. He delineates the underlying structural features of tribal consciousness of the peasants, namely, negation, solidarity, transmission, territoriality, etc.

This can help us understand how and why the peasants rebel. Guha and others are not in favor of classifying the struggles into categories which have a greater element of arbitrariness. Social realities are complex and it is misleading to divide them artificially. They believe that paradigms are important in analyzing the complexities.

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