

A Review of Agrarian Studies in Maharashtra: Issues and Challenges

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Abstract : *This paper is based on the review of studies on agrarian issues and challenges of the Maharashtra in general. The paper is attempted to focus on the certain important aspects of Agrarian society. Today, agrarian societies in India in general and Maharashtra in particular had undergone many changes. Agrarian societies are in the transition phase, and in crisis. Studies done by the Indian scholars show that present young generation is not interested for the cultivation, cultivable land is transforming for the non-cultivable activities. Small and marginal farmers are selling their lands and migrating to the urban places in search of alternatives for their survival. Due to the male migration from the rural to urban areas, female were undergone pressure of the agriculture. The families whose head / male members either (farmers) have been suicides or been migrated to the other places, member of such families, small children and widows / young women are in the crisis. Farming sector is being commercialized in day by day, input expenditure is increasing. Farmer has to invest a lot amount on the various farming activities such as, land cultivation, sowing seeds, bringing fertilizers, pesticides and the last have to depend upon the mediators for the marketing of agricultural products. Even they don't have provided ware houses for storage the products. There is no grantee to protect their products from calamities and disasters. Government has been failed to provide life security to the farming community. They don't have fix prices to their agricultural products. Governmental organizations have not any mechanism to purchase their products on the fixed rate and provide security to their food and production. Further, natural calamities, droughts, floods, climate changes, soil erosion and deforestation etc raised challenges in front of the farming communities*

(Keywords: *Agrarian, Farmers, Maharashtra, Farming Community, Challenges***)**

I. Introduction

The literature on agrarian studies in Maharashtra is not huge in present days. Recently, one can come across very few studies which are available in this area. Agrarian studies have wide dimensions, scope and importance in this area. There is huge gap and lack of available qualitative, ethnographic and in- depth study on the agrarian structure of the Maharashtra. Very few studies are available which provide very less and inadequate information about the emerging issues in the agrarian society of the State. However, this paper is attempted to focus on the certain important aspects of Agrarian society. Today, agrarian societies in India in general and Maharashtra in particular had undergone many changes. Agrarian societies are in the transition phase, and in crisis. Studies done by the Indian scholars show that present young generation is not interested for the cultivation, cultivable land is transforming for the non-cultivable activities. Small and marginal farmers are selling their lands and migrating to the urban places in search of alternatives for their survival. Due to the male migration from the rural to urban areas, female were undergone pressure of the agriculture. The families whose head / male members either (farmers) have been suicides or been migrated to the other places, member of such families, small children and widows / young women are in the crisis. Farming sector is being commercialized in day by day, input expenditure is increasing. Farmer has to invest a lot amount on the various farming activities such as, land cultivation, sowing seeds, bringing fertilizers, pesticides and the last have to depend upon the mediators for the marketing of agricultural products. Even they don't have provided ware houses for storage the products. There is no grantee to protect their products from calamities and disasters. Government has been failed to provide life security to the farming community. They don't have fix prices to their agricultural products. Governmental organizations have not any mechanism to purchase their products on the fixed rate and provide security to their food and production. Further, natural calamities, droughts, floods, climate changes, soil erosion and deforestation etc raised challenges in front of the farming communities. State has shifted its policies from welfare to private sectors after 1991 and reduced subsidy. Agricultural development programs and policies have been failed to reduce rural poverty and bring out social- economical changes in the life of rural people. MNREGS and other rural developmental programs had not any effects on the improvement of the quality of life of the rural people. Due to the many lacunas and defaulters in administrative mismanagement of the

implementation of the programs have been ineffective impacts on the rural society. Even today, farmers are committing suicides in day to day lives. Approximately, during the last one and half decade, more than 50,000 farmers have been committed suicides in Maharashtra. Still there is no any mechanism to stop such inhumane activities. However, introduced packages for the victimized families also were in vain. Therefore, there should be attempt to understand these issues through intensive studies. But so far studies are concern in this respective area, we find very few references. However, this paper is aimed to review such studies which reflect upon the agrarian society of the Maharashtra. But this paper has its own limitation to cover all aspects of the agrarian society.

II. A Brief Outline of the State

The State of Maharashtra came into being in 1960, bifurcation of the bilingual state of Bombay. Historically, the State is divided into four main regions namely, Konkon, Vidharbaha, Western Maharashtra and Marathwada. Konkon is considered as part of Western Maharashtra because of its proximity to Bombay (B.Mohanty:2009). B.B. Mohanty focused on the regional disparity in agricultural development of Maharashtra. B.Mohanty followed political economy perspective to analyze the regional disparity in Maharashtra and argued that western Maharashtra is developed because of the political leadership and caste network of this region which played great role in the decision making. Even though Maharashtra is called industrialized and developed state of the India; still more than 64 % people of the state are living in the rural areas. Their livelihood pattern is depended upon the agriculture. According to the 1981 census data 24 % people are living in the urban areas of the country whereas, 75 % were living in the rural areas. This situation is varied from state to state. 35 % urbanization was increased in Maharashtra. It is meant that 65 % people are still living in the rural areas. Again region wise and district wise, we find variations in the proportion of the rural and urban population in the state. Mumbai, Pune, Thane, Nagpur etc are the urbanized places of the State. Chndhrapur, Nanded, Hingoli, Latur and Solapur etc are the less urbanized and more ruralised places of the State. There are some district in which only 8 to 13 % of the population are urbanized and remaining are livening in the rural areas. It is meant that by excluding certain pockets of the state, we assume that almost 72 to 74 % people are still living in the rural areas of the Maharashtra. These people are associated with the agriculture and allied occupation. Thus, however, there was very less effort was taken by the social scientists to understand the various issues related to the agrarian society of the state. Social sciences came into existence after 1950 in the state in Universities and colleges as subject for study and research. Bombay University has opened Department of Sociology in 1920 and other Universities of the State started to teach social sciences in the different parts of the Maharashtra. There is huge gap and lack of available qualitative, ethnographic and in- depth study on the agrarian structure of the Maharashtra. Very few studies are available which provide very less and inadequate information about the different emerging agricultural issues. Today, agrarian society is in crisis. It has gone under many changes and transitions. It has to face many challenges. Among these, study found that farmer's suicide, decline state role from welfare policies and reduced subsidy, changing nature of climate and environmental hazards and its impacts on agriculture. Regional disparity, droughts, floods, natural calamities and its impact on the society, decline interest of young generation in the farming, increasing landlessness among the marginal and small farmers, increasing rate of migration from rural to urban, and emerging burden over the female in agriculture, intervention of the privatization in the agriculture, mono cropping and lease out in agriculture etc are emerging challenges in front of the agrarian societies in the State in particular and country in general. Thus, by keeping these broad issues in the mind, this paper would attempt to review of literature which is available in the form of books, articles and reports which reflects upon the various dimension of the agrarian society of the state. Herewith, I am not argued that this paper would collected all literature published by the scholars on this issue. I tried to use whatever is avail and easily accessible to me.

III. Theoretical Perspectives on Agrarian Studies

There are different theoretical perspectives available on area of agrarian studies in India. First generation of social scientists (A.R. Deasi) used Marxian perspective to analyze the social background of Indian nationalism. Usta Patnaik, Ashok Rudra raised argument on mode of production debate in Indian agriculture. They claimed that Indian agriculture is even feudalistic, semi-feudalistic and in capitalistic in nature. Post Marxists are using dependency perspective to analyze the regional disparity and inequality. Feminist scholars are using gender perspective to analyze the role of women in agriculture. Besides these, social scientists used structural-functional, stratification perspective to analyze the agrarian issues. Thus, we find above emerging dominant perspective in the academically circle for references. In the context of Maharashtra agrarian society, we find that there are very few social scientists those followed theoretical perspective to understand the agrarian structure of the society. Early Maharashtra sociologists and social scientists, mostly, followed structural- functional perspective and indological perspective to understand the society. D.N.Dhanagare and R.S.Desshpnde followed political economy perspective to criticize the role of the State and attacks on the role of caste based political

decision related to the economy. Baburao Baviskar worked on sugar co-operatives in Maharashtra and criticized to the caste politics nexus and their intervention in the cooperative. B.B. Mohanty and Jasmine Damle used dependency theory to analyze regional disparity within the state. There are some studies available on the issues of farmer's suicide in Maharashtra. TISS, Mumbai SRTM, Institute of Aurangabad and Gokhale Institute of Pune etc studied on the issues of Farmer's suicide in Maharashtra. B.B.Mohanty tried to analyze farmer's suicide through Durkheimian types. Besides these, there are some scholars who focused on the different aspect of the rural society through different perspectives. Among these, scholars Gopal Guru, Gail Ombedt, S.P Punalekar, J.Lele, Abhaya Datar and Suhas Palsikikar etc. However, it is mentioned already at beginning of this paper is that this paper has its own limitation. This paper is not covered all aspects of the rural society.

However, this paper is aimed to focus on the agrarian studies. Then we come to know very few studies and references which are available in this area. History shows that Sarjan Kots (1820) had written book on *Loni* village of Maharashtra (D.N.Dhanagare: 2013) again G.S. Ghurye revisited and studied the same village during 1950-55. G.S.Ghurye's studies are available on Villages of Malwan. M.Phule was written book on *Setakaracha Asud* in 1883. Nanashheb Chafekar (1933) has written book of *Badalapur* village. T.N.Atre was written book on the village in the name of *Goangada*. Thomas Moon through economic survey wrote book on the Village of Deccan. V.M. Dandekar and Jagtap wrote book on the *Rural Structure of Maharashtra*. Dandekar (1986) studied The Village of *Sugaon* from Satara district of Maharashtra. Researcher tried to describe the impacts of urban influence on the village life. Major goal of the research was to examine the transformation in rural life occurring in India from a holistic perspective. Researcher used the dependency theory to analyze the relationship between core (Bombay) urban city and periphery (*Sugaon*) village. Thus, the findings of this study show that economy increasingly linked with the larger region around it having strong connection to the metropolitan city of Bombay. The village provides not only cheap labour to the city's industries but also an expanding market for the city's exports, receiving in return remittances of cash and kind that allows the village population to develop. Hiramani studied two villages of Marathwada region in 1977. In this study, Hiramani focused on the caste system in villages, the nature of village life, significance of family in the social life of the individual and the community. Study Also took interest to examine changes in the social life marriage, family, types of houses and household belongings, occupational structure, *baluta system*, stratification, commensality and institutions of political power and authority. Borkar, V.V. and Padhye M.D (1964), studied the socio-economic condition of the people who are living in the *Command area of Purna Project* of the Marathwada region of the Maharashtra state. In their *study*, they used stratified sampling method to select the appropriate sample for the study. Study selected twenty villages from the *Command area of the project*. Study selected four highly irrigated villages from Parbhani and Nanded district. In their study, they found that the benefits of irrigation are not confined to the farm sector alone; but study also induced a change in the other sectors of the economy. The arrival of irrigation facilities on a massive scale- as in the case of *Purna Project* – exerts an influence on the whole occupational pattern of the area and the surrounding region. The enriching of the farm sector as a result of the *Purna project* is bound to give rise to new industries and bring about an extension of trade and commerce and social services. Patil (1980) carried out a study in the *Ghod Command Area* of Maharashtra region. This study focused on the socio-economic conditions of the farmers. Study selected Sample of 400 farmers from the same region, 40 in each cluster were randomly selected. Data was collected on land use pattern, crop pattern, agricultural implements and crop- wise labour input. The analysis is presented per farm, and per hectare on adoption of improved agricultural implements and crop-wise labour input. The analysis was presented per farm, and per hectare on adoption of improved agricultural practices like improved seed, cultivation practices, seed treatment, use of fertilizers and green manure. At each stage, irrigated Vs unirrigated ways of cultivations are compared. The yield rates are compared at two points of time: (1969-70) and (1975-76) – before the onset of irrigation is better off over pre- irrigation in all aspects. Consumption of foodgrains, (cereals, pluses), protective items like milk, oil, vegetables, spices, meat, fish, egg, fruit and beverage per family, per adult unit, has been observed to have improved in the irrigated area with time. B.C.Barik (2010) carried out study on three villages in the Nanded district of Marathwada region. This study used comparative perspective to analyze the impact of irrigation on the socio-economical and political structure of the villages. Study selected three different types of the villages from the same region for the intensive study. The first two villages, *Degaon* and *Dapshed* are having irrigation facilities, while the third village, *Kalgaon* is non-irrigated village whose agriculture is completely dependent upon monsoon. *Degaon* village is getting canal water since 1990s, while *Dapshed* village cultivators have created their own sources of water like, wells and bore wells in their lands for irrigation. Study found variations in terms of their socio-economical, educational and political lives. Study also found high rate of migration in the non-irrigated village as compared to the irrigated villages. Irrigated villages were providing employment to the labourers in the villages whereas non-irrigated village had not stopped outmigration of the labourers. In borewell village, farmers were very conscious about the use of water but on the contrary, in the canal irrigated village, farmers were not for the same. However, the nature of the study to focus on the rural social formation of the Marathwada region. Study found inters village variations

and intra-village variations. So thus, these are the studies which are available in the form of books and articles which focused on the different aspects of the village life of the Maharashtra. However, this paper is not claimed that these are the final studies. However, there might be more studies which were not noticed and come across.

There are lot of studies and reports available which focused on the regional disparity in Maharashtra. As mentioned above that B.Mohanty and Jasmine Damle (2001) followed dependency theory to analyze the regional disparity and inequality in the State. But mostly these studies are based on the secondary sources. They used data from the various reports of the committees which organized by the State government under the Dandekar and other scholars. In this context R.S. Deshpande, D.N. Dhanagare followed political economy perspective to criticize the role of State and its politics. D.N Dhanagare (1991) followed political economy perspective to analyze the role of State to overcome the problems of the regional disparity in Maharashtra. He criticized the developmental policies of the state which are unfavourable of the poor farmers and women of the Marathwada and Vidharbah region, even though State is industrially progressive and developed; certain pockets of the State (Marathwada and Vidharabha) are still undeveloped. He raised argument against the state machinery which failed to provide water in the drought season (1992) to the remote areas of the state like Gadchiroli. B.Mohanty followed political economy perspective to analyze the regional disparity in Maharashtra and argued that western Maharashtra is developed because of the political leadership and caste network of this region which played great role in the decision making. R.S Deshpande and A Narayanmoorthy (2001) criticized the role of state irrigation department which had not been fulfilling the expected target of the irrigation in the state as compared to other state of the country. Maharashtra has the lowest share of irrigation. They found out three points of this problems, such Irrigation has always remained sensitive issues in the political economy of Maharashtra as strong political groups came from the irrigated region of the state as well, second the potential of the minor irrigation covers larger portion of the ultimate potential irrigation hence public attention directed to this sources.. Lastly, despite the numerous committees and commissions and volumes of work on irrigation, the State could utilize only 39.3 per cent its ultimate potential compared the share of with other states. Sandra Maclaren (1991) studies co-operative marketing societies of Marathwada. He also used case study method to analyze the impact of co- operative marketing societies on the farmers of this region. He argued that Co-operative have been failed to bring out changes in the life of the farmers. Baburao Baviskar Studied sugar co-operatives in Maharashtra and argued that due to the political intervention co-operative failed to bring out development in the state. Whereas S.Salunake argued that lift irrigation has been successful in the Warna region of the western Maharashtra to bring out social development. Farmer's Suicide has become acute problems in the Maharashtra last one decade. History shows that farmers never went for the suicide. They had gone many natural and economical disasters. They had resistance power to sustain in the crisis. But they don't commit suicide. B.B.Mohanty & Sangeeta Shroff (2004) studied on the issues of farmer's suicides in Maharashtra. They study three districts Amaravati, Yavatmal and Wardha of the Vidharaba region of the state. They found out the causes of farmers suicides such as crop losses, indebtedness, market imperfections, and economic hardship to farmers, besides these factors, they also found out some social factors which are the causes of the suicides. S.S.Kalamkar & Sangeeta Shroff (2011) studied the impact of rehabilitation package in suicide prone districts of Vidarbha region of the state. This study is based on the both type of data secondary as well as primary. Primary data is collected from the three suicide prone district of the Vidarbha region out of the six suicide prone districts. This study concludes that the farmers are aware of the Prime ministerial rehabilitation package, relief measures and subsidy and loan. But they are not benefited to get it.

IV. Conclusion

Thus, this is brief attempt to review some studies on Agrarian societies in Maharashtra and come to know that there is need to have lot of in-depth and intensive studies on the different aspects of the agrarian societies. The social scientists and researcher has broader scope in this area, by doing qualitative research, he/ she can give suggestion to the policy makers, planners and developmental organizations to overcome the problems of the farming communities. This study found out many issues and challenges related to the agriculture of the Maharashtra, such as, present young generation is not interested for the cultivation, cultivable land is transforming for the non-cultivable activities. Small and marginal farmers are selling their lands and migrating to the urban places in search of alternatives for their survival. Due to the male migration from the rural to urban areas, female were undergone pressure of the agriculture. The families whose head / male members either (farmers) have been suicides or been migrated to the other places, member of such families, small children and widows / young women are in the crisis. Farming sector is being commercialized in day by day, input expenditure is increasing. Thus, on the basis of these finding issues and challenges, policy makers, developmental organizations and researcher made plan for the sustainable development of the agriculture.

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