

Caste, Class and Labour: Study of Changing Agrarian Relations in a Telangana village

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BY

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I hereby declare that the research work presented in this thesis entitled “*Caste, Class and Labour: Study of Changing Agrarian Relations in a Telangana Village*” has been carried out by me at Department of Sociology, School of Social Sciences, University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad under the supervision and guidance of **Prof. N. Purendra Prasad**, for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, is an original work of mine and to the best of my knowledge, no part of this dissertation has been submitted earlier for the award of any research degree or diploma in full or partial fulfillment to any other University. I hereby agree that my thesis can be deposited in Shodhganga/ INFLIBNET.

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This is to certify that the thesis entitled “*Caste, Class and Labour: Study of Changing Agrarian Relations in a Telangana Village*” submitted by **BHOOPATHI REDDY B** bearing Regd. No. **07SSPH02** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of **Doctor of Philosophy** in the **Department of Sociology** is a bonafide work carried out by him under my supervision and guidance.

The thesis is free from plagiarism and has not been submitted previously in part or in full to this or any other University or Institution for the award of any degree or diploma.

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Chapter I

Introduction

"Historical writings consolidated this synecdoche: the village stands for the rural"

Neeladri Bhattacharya (2018)

Indian agrarian society has undergone a structural shift, with movement of labor from agriculture to non-agriculture employment. In 2009-10, 65% of the rural Net Domestic Product (NDP) was accounted for by non-agricultural employment compared to 37% in 1980-81. Agriculture still contributed 68% of total rural workforce in 2009-10, but its share in the GDP dropped from 41% to 14% during 1972 to 2011(Reddy et al, 2014).The increase in percentage of non-agricultural or rural non-farm work has not been accompanied by a corresponding decrease in the percentage of population dependent on agriculture. There has also been an increase in percentage of small agricultural landholdings and a decrease in the average size of landholdings. Rural labor market has undergone a structural change with a movement of labor from agriculture to non-agricultural employment.

1.1 Focus of the Study

This study presents an account of diversification of occupations in rural Telangana through a case study of Kotha Armur village in Nizamabad district of Telangana state. The study is conceptualized in the context of rural occupational diversity, and attempts to study agrarian change by surveying the households to know the nature and kinds of work household members engage in with reference to caste, class (land) and labour (occupation).The study attempts to map agrarian change in the context of small farm

agriculture—the agrarian crisis—extenuated by an increasing trend of rural population moving away from agricultural work. While the literature on agrarian change suggests the transition to capitalism would result in industrialization and the transformation of the dispossessed agrarian proletariat into wage labourers for industry, and the farmlands would become increasingly concentrated and come to be controlled by a few capitalist farmers. This is not the situation in India, where in many parts of the country, small farms have proliferated and the average size of landholdings has substantially decreased for example, the proportion of small farms in Andhra Pradesh in the year 2010-11 was a whopping 86% of total farmland indicating the fragmentation and the extent of small farm agriculture in India.

1.2 Review of Literature

The literature review engages with various approaches to studying Agrarian relations, including socio-anthropological village study, and studying a village from the perspective of political economy of agrarian change. It then delves into exploring literature on Agrarian change, and the agrarian question through the lens of classical Marxism among other approaches. Examining various debates around the agrarian question, it focuses on the Indian debate in colonial context, underscoring Colonial mode of production and agrarian relations. Moving forward, it delineates the process of class differentiation in Indian agriculture in postcolonial context, culminating into the agrarian Questions Today rooted in global finance capital.

1.2.1 Village Studies

The classical village study conceptualised and examined the village through the thematic of caste and class relations. A widely used method of village studies is to invoke the socio-economic and cultural diversity of a village as the means of storytelling. Villages have also been called 'a little republic' or depending on its economic condition, 'developmentalist village'. A yet more popular notion is that of the peasant community. However there are methodological problems related to this village studies approach. Jan Breman et al (1997) raised the question of the relevance of a village study on the basis of two considerations: how the action and life processes of individuals and households relate to social mechanisms of the whole village, and which analytical dimension of social structure and change is likely to be lost if the village loses its relevance as an established unit of study.

However, in the defense of village studies, Rao and Reddy (2008) pointed out in their introduction to a volume on rural transition in Andhra Pradesh that “village studies enable the researcher to examine not only individual households but also relational dimensions and their multi-faceted nature.”(ibid: 2). While studies of individuals and households may not be an adequate tool to gain an understanding of the village, it is still important to do so to complement macro data and capture the real life processes at play in villages.

One instance where micro level studies may be very handy is in observational and explorative studies concerned with tracking qualitative and quantitative changes in village life. It is a well-known phenomenon that villages are no longer the isolated entities they once used to be. They absorb "micro influences from above," as well as

send, "micro impulses from below."(ibid: 2). As a result of structural changes brought about by the commodification of land, crops and labour, dynamics of rural societies are in shift and village studies are capable of shedding light on the myriad intricacies and subtleties that may be missed by macro studies. In contemporary India, it is no longer helpful to talk about a rigid separation between urban and rural societies based on the commonality that characterizes elements within each and on the difference that pervades elements between them. Different rural regions have experienced different trajectories of growth and integration, and sometimes villages even within the same region may have undergone different trajectories. Thus, village studies "are helpful in raising questions like whether the village is a cohesive community or the locus of caste conflicts or highly differentiated societies."(ibid: 2)

There is a methodological difference between a village study and a village survey. A survey can be usefully defined as "an enquiry based on one or more specific aspects of rural life . . . or a comprehensive survey based on a total census of households covering a wide range of socio-economic variables."(ibid: 7-8). On the other hand, a village study usually focuses on a single village and attempts to provide social and anthropological data of the village concerned.

Some clarifications regarding the status of a village is therefore of considerable significance. Dominant currents in colonial historiography, for instance, regarded Indian villages as eternally unchanging, isolated and self-sustaining polities that acquired the moniker of 'little republics' due to what was thought to be the self-sufficient quality of

villages, in the sense that they were bound and closed entities in themselves.¹ However, though contemporary scholarship argues for the significance of studying a single village as a credible unit of analysis, it does not construct the village as either isolated or indelible or self-sufficient. The long view of history that has become academic and social scientific common sense prefers the integrated approach to explain not just contemporary but also historical phenomena. It does not just regard the village to have become integrated and open to influences in modernity due to ongoing structural changes, but forwards the thesis that villages everywhere were always open to influences through the functioning of "markets, personalized economic connections in the form of community networks, political alliances and coalitions, inherited and shared cultural practices"(Rao and Reddy, 2008:8). Thus, a village study's strength may not be its independence and self-sufficiency but in its complementarity with surveys and macro studies.

Numerous single village studies were undertaken in the immediate post-Independence period. The social anthropological method of study preferred tracking the evolution of village life and the network of relations within the village as well as those that the village developed with its exteriors. The appeal of these studies lay in the fact that while macro studies and data sets were able to offer trends and regional variations, they had virtually nothing to say about the experience of living in a village amidst the change and transformation that modern society essentially brought.

¹ Some of the well-known proponents of this theoretical leaning are Monier-Williams, Thomas Munro, Charles Metcalfe and L.S.S O' Malley. Some of the important criticisms of this conceptualization have come from scholarship, Louis Dumont, B.R. Ambedkar, M.N. Srinivas and Ronald Inden. Contemporary scholarship by and large favours the counter-view as empirical changes have made the unchanging and self-sufficient thesis baseless and factually incorrect.

Rao and Reddy credits S.C. Dube as the first Indian scholar to successfully conduct and publish a study on a single village. Dube's 1955 book *Indian Village* was an account of the field study he conducted in Shamirpet, which at the time lay 25 kilometers outside the city of Hyderabad. It analysed social, cultural, economic and political aspects of village life in Telangana and was received enthusiastically by the contemporary social science scholarship.

Some of the well-known scholars and researchers of single-village studies include M.N. Srinivas (1942), Andre Beteille (1965), Scarlett Epstein (1962), Joan Mencher (1974), Christoph von Furer-Haimendorf (1966), K. Ishwaran (1968), Kathleen Gough (1982), A.M. Shah (1974) and Jan Breman (1993).² Methodological debates within village studies had their source in the deployment of factors and their relative importance. For example, M.N. Srinivas' use of Sanskritization and dominant caste set off a debate on the significance of caste in understanding village dynamics as opposed to the primacy of economic factors such as capitalist mode of production and agrarian transition. By and large, social anthropological village studies in India have ignored economic factors, except perhaps Andre Beteille (1965), A.M. Shah (2002), Tom Kessnger (1971), and a few others. In comparison, according to Rao and Reddy, "Studies in economic anthropology in India are rare."(Rao and Reddy, 2008: 9)

A common theme in any current study based on the socio-anthropological method is the relatively high degree of erosion of the gap between rural and urban society. For instance, Shamirpet, the village studied by Dube in 1955, then 25 km away from Hyderabad city,

²Some of those mentioned brought into focus a village 're-study', that is, to go back to the same village studied earlier and track the changes that have taken place since the last study. It was the pre-cursor of what would come to be called longitudinal studies.

subsequently became a part of the city in the 1990s and presently cannot even be regarded as bordering on the outskirts of the city. In a similar vein, Wangala and Dalena, studied by Epstein and her colleagues in the 1950s, were outlying villages in the then Mysore state. When Epstein returned 40 years later, she could not but attribute urban impact as an outstanding factor in the transformation that had taken place in the meantime.

Perhaps the most self-critical statement from the socio-anthropological academics came from Andre Beteille, who wrote much later that sociology and social anthropology had ignored power and property equations in their village studies in the 1950s and 1960s (Beteille, 1974)

Another much used method is the longitudinal study based on a combination of ethnographic and textual methods, with the aim of establishing patterns of continuity and change over long periods of time. Lanjouw and Stern (1998) authored a longitudinal study of the Palanpur village in Moradabad district in western Uttar Pradesh. The study summarized findings of previous studies from the years 1957-8, 1962-3, 1974-5, 1983-4 and 1993. It was mainly concerned with changes in village structure, economics and opportunities over time, and found considerable transformation in labour markets, credit and land markets. Important factors shaping and influencing the process of transformation were attributed to Demographic change and population growth, agricultural and household technology, and expansion of employment opportunities outside agriculture (Rao and Reddy, 2008).

Jan Breman attempted to generalize the results obtained from village studies "as indicative of the fact that the rural landscape has been undergoing a process of scale-

enlargement giving rise to the broadening of villagers' horizons. Loyalties towards external relations and institutions have replaced the mutual commitments of rural folk. The erosion of the traditional distributive mechanism has sharpened class conflicts and antagonisms." (Cited in Rao and Reddy, 2008).

1.2.2 Reviewing Agrarian Change Literature

The classical agrarian question was based on the assumption that surplus from agriculture would result in industrialization and reconstitution of the village as a site from which to derive cheap industrial labour and serve as a market for industrially produced goods. According to Marxist framework, contradictions within the feudal mode of production where static ownership of land and rapidly moving science and technology, as well as commodity production and trade contributed to the rupture in feudal relations and the emergence of capitalist relations. Under capitalism, industries would replace agriculture as the main source of wealth creation and accumulation of surplus. As a result, traditional forms of bondage (of the slave or of the serf) were removed and labour became 'free' in the sense of its freedom in spatial movement, though separation of a large mass of people from means of ownership meant that they could provide for even their mere physical existence by selling their labour power and participating in exchange relations. Marx theorised the relation between the owners of the means of production, and the labourers who can sell only his labour power as the constitutive element in capitalism. Though in his own time he would have witnessed different degrees of social evolution or the transition from the feudal mode to the capitalist mode, he nonetheless devised capitalism as an agency that will lead to the extinction of any other form of labour than that of the 'free' kind, meaning the division of the whole economy between owners of means of

production who gain the surplus value resulting from exploitation of labour power and reproduce it through each generation of the accumulative process.

There are different ways in which the agrarian question was addressed in classical Marxism. The first is attributed to Friedrich Engels (2014), who dealt with the topic in *The Peasant Question in France and Germany*, where he called the peasantry ‘a very essential factor in population, production and political power’.³ TJ Byres (1986) has drawn attention to the explicitly political nature of the considerations made by the early Marxists. In one of his essays, he wrote early Marxists in the second half of the 19th century “confronted “the substantial presence of the old mode of production: that is to say, by continuing economic backwardness.”(Byres, 1986: 8). The backwardness was the backwardness of production relations, the presence of a yet incomplete transition from feudal to capitalist mode of production. The political concern with regard to this was the inadequate development of class consciousness in ‘peasants’. As Byres wrote, “Marx and Engels always stressed the political apathy of peasants: an apathy born, in part, of their objective, material circumstances. If capitalism swept them away, this would not constitute a problem for socialist parties. But it had not yet done so.” (ibid: 8)

Byres suspected that conceptual development in Marxist historical thinking may have given rise to an expectation that non-capitalist relations would wither away once they came into contact with the capitalist mode. Just like in the industrial sector the vast majority of labour was mediated through the form of wage labour and the dominant relation in the productive realm was that of the capitalist and the worker, a similar relation would emerge in the agrarian sector. This meant the detachment of peasants,

³Engels, *The Peasant Question*

especially small, subsistence-level peasants, from the land and their proletarianisation and the privatized concentration of land by big capitalist farmers. The urgent political programme, therefore, was to seize political power to establish inalienable rights of the small proprietor under a state-mediated collective form of agriculture.

The other classical Marxist approach is attributed jointly to Karl Kautsky and Vladimir Lenin. Kautsky's book *The Agrarian Question* (1989) and Lenin's (1956) book *Development of Capitalism in Russia* are the two works noted for their engagement with the agrarian question. Jairus Banaji (2010) has formulated the concerns of Kautsky in the following manner: 'Why does the development of capitalism proceed at a pace and take a form different from that of industry? Why does the capitalist mode of production, despite the dominance attributed to it, coexist with pre-capitalist social relations of production; and what is the effect of this coexistence on the social formation?' (In Editorial Note, Banaji, 2010)

According to Byres, what separates Kautsky's and Lenin's renditions of the agrarian question from Engel's rendition is "the fact of a differentiated and differentiating peasantry" (Byres, 1986: 12). That is present in a much more succinct form in Kautsky and Lenin's writings. One of the main aims of Lenin in trying to find a response to the agrarian question was to show that even under the relatively backward conditions in Russia when compared with the more industrialised western economies, capitalism could develop and was, in fact, in the process of developing. The question of a transition, therefore, was not treated by them just as the inevitable transition from an agrarian to an industrial society, but the specific social formations that were emerging out of the process of transition itself.

For both Kautsky and Lenin, the agrarian question continued to be the ‘peasant question’ with all the political urgency they had inherited from Marx and Engels, but instead of predicating the question on the eventual complete takeover by capitalist relations and the division of the entire agrarian population into predominantly two classes of agrarian capitalists and agrarian proletariat, there was greater acceptance of *various* classes, sections and groups of the rural population that emerged and were emerging from the ongoing transition.

Lenin’s debate with AV Chayanov was based on the problem of characterising the differentiation going on in Russia on both sides of the turn of the 20th century. Chayanov conceptualised a demographic differentiation that did not involve a fundamental differentiation based on class lines in agrarian society. Comparing the capitalist mode of production and the agrarian or peasant mode of production, he wrote that the capitalist mode reproduced itself through the formal link between wages, interest, rent and profit, and if even one of these components is missing from a given economic system, then the classical political economy mode of analysis cannot be used to explain it, as it necessarily assumes the presence of each of these components.

According to Chayanov (1986), since in peasant economy, labour takes the form of family labour and the income derived from output is collectively consumed by the family as a unit, there is no category of wage in it. In a macro-political sense, therefore, the peasant economy has to be distinguished from the capitalist mode of production. Though it is contemporary to capitalism, it is a parallel system and not part of capitalism, yet it cannot be thought of as feudal or backward form of production since it coexists with and even competes with the capitalist mode. Russian agrarian society was undergoing a

demographic differentiation due to the changing size of peasant farms in each generation: “he traced the ‘natural history of the family from the time of marriage of the young couple through the growth of the children to working age and marriage of this second generation. In relating this natural history of the family to the changing size of the peasant farms from generation to generation, Chayanov developed the concept of ‘demographic differentiation’.” (In Introduction, Patnaik, 1990)

In contrast, the socialist political programme consisted of intervening in the transition from an agrarian society organised according to traditional, pre-capitalist obligatory and rentier forms of landholding to arrest the development of big farmers and a rural proletariat, and create an emancipated form of agrarian social organisation. Lenin had identified two models of capitalist development of agriculture in a 'backward' country. These were the Prussian model or landlord capitalism from above; and the American model or peasant capitalism from below. Both required state action at a large scale to provide an initial impetus to traverse backwardness.

With regard to the concrete status of small farmers or peasants, the classical agrarian question can, at least nominally, be differentiated from the agrarian question of what has been variously termed as 'under-developed', 'third world' or previously colonised states, due to the unique political conditions of colonialism. The latter has often been referred to as the agrarian question of the South, the reference being an explicit point of departure from the standard renditions of the late 19th and early 20th centuries to include and explain the specific agrarian realities in, mainly, Asia, Africa and Latin America.

T J Byres, dealing precisely with this specificity in the East Asian context where a state-led capitalism has experienced considerable success, defined agrarian transition as “those

changes in the countryside necessary to the *overall* development of capitalism or of socialism, and to the ultimate dominance of either of those modes of production in a particular national social formation.” (Byres, 1986: 86)

This is the most formidable political economic problem for under-developed countries is the unresolved agrarian question, “the central distinguishing characteristic of economic backwardness” (ibid: 9). of poor countries in Asia, Latin America and Africa. The experience of these countries suggested that there is a possibility for a variety of transitions from the pre-capitalist to the capitalist, from the backward to industrialized.

Indian debate

The transition to capitalism is inseparable from the agrarian question. In societies of Asia, Latin America and Africa, capitalism did not grow organically as it had in Britain or other parts of Europe. It came from the outside, through colonial powers, which gradually imposed the capitalist mode of production. Specifically in the case of India, a predominantly agrarian country though there was a high incidence of towns and manufacturing industries, commodities and money were introduced by the British on a large scale. From here arose questions of backwardness, transition and so on. The main issue was of the character of surplus generation. Traditionally, surplus was generated by agriculture and this surplus formed bases for society’s operation through the state. Under capitalism, agricultural surplus is overtaken by industrial surplus and agriculture ceases to be the predominant generator of surplus, though in several erstwhile agrarian countries and regions, it continues to be the highest employer of the aggregate work-force. Now, 70 years after independence from British rule, the main question continues to be that of transition: how to characterise the form of different urban and rural sectors in terms of

their economic interactions? While there is a hyper-capitalist industrialism in the big cities, can Indian villages be said to have transitioned into capitalism? Or, what is the content of this transition?

Various methods were used for accelerating capitalist agrarian transition in colonial India. In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the British attempted to create a group of landlords who were to pay annual revenue to British administration at a rate pre-decided and not to be changed. This was the Permanent Settlement plan. But instead of creating imitation of landed aristocracy in England, in eastern India the “the semi-feudal structures . . . constituted a massive obstacle to a successful capitalist agrarian transition in India.”(Byres,1986:40). In England, the differentiation of peasants occurred in “the long gestation in the womb of feudal society” (Byres, 1986:20) and differentiation between landlords, rich tenants and agricultural labourers had with time metamorphosed into capitalist relations in agriculture.

Rudra et al (1990) studying big farmers of Punjab, observed that in India, many small or medium farms may operate on the capitalist basis, whereas even farms bigger than a relatively large category, say 20 acres, may not qualify as a capitalist enterprise. In Punjab, the land owned by big farmers increased between 1955-56 and 1967-68 by about 9.5%, but the average conceals the fact that while the size of farms ranging from 20-25 acres increased by only 4%, larger farms sized between 100-150 acres increased by about 40% in the same period. The state’s role in capitalising the agrarian sector was to partly finance the purchase of tractors, pump-sets and tube-wells. Not all big farmers owned all these machines but that suggested that machines were being hired to be used.

An important contributing factor was the social origin of the large farmers in Punjab, as many of them came from the professional classes, consisting of ex-army men, retired civil servants, businessmen and so on. The new capitalist farmer can be nominally distinguished in this sense from the peasant-cultivators and the traditional landlords, though they “as yet play quite an insignificant role in the transformation that is taking place in Punjab agriculture.”(Rudra et al, 1990:16). Utsa Patnaik credits Daniel Thorner as the first observer to call attention to investment funds of urban or industrial origin coming into the agrarian sector. Though this does translate into a decline of life-long farmers, since 92% of big farmers reported to be in farming all their life, they may yet be “symptomatic of a new economic conjuncture.” (Patnaik, 1990: 38)

Another feature that deserves attention is the leasing in of land by big farmers from marginal, small and medium farmers. Very little land was rented out by big farmers, with only 2.9% of the total big-farmer owned land being given out on tenancy.

Rudra et al (1990) attempted to locate the capitalist farmer in terms of:

1. Cultivating land : rented out land ratio being heavier on the side of the former
2. Predominantly wage payments in cash
3. Inclined to use contemporary heavy machinery
4. Producing predominantly for the market
5. Cultivating for profit and calculating it on cash returns from total sale

Based on these criteria, Rudra found no clear correlation between these factors both individually and collectively, and concluded that the presence of the capitalist farmer is questionable and its existence cannot be generalized. This conclusion, however, has been

criticized by Utsa Patnaik. As already mentioned, this phenomenon is negligible in statistical terms, as evident from the survey carried out by Rudra.

Utsa Patnaik writes that profit-oriented production and investment in land by a certain agrarian section had become a major factor in Indian agriculture. Returning to the agrarian question of transition to capitalism, she writes that India had a very large proportion of agricultural labourers as shown in the census reports of 1921 and 1931. It was about 21% in 1921 and had grown to 31% in 1931. According to Patnaik, this rather large mass of agrarian labourer could only be attributable to developments in the colonial period, “in particular the combination of a rigid demand for revenue by the state and increasing vulnerability to fluctuations in world prices as commercialisation grew.” (Patnaik, 1990: 40)

But does this mean that India already had made the transition to capitalism under colonialism? If so, then Rudra’s conclusion was problematic, since the question of the existence of the capitalist farmer would have been settled well before the period in which he raised the question. Patnaik rectifies the terms of the assumption. While pauperisation or de-peasantisation had occurred under imperial control, there was no correlational emergence of modern industry. Thus, the ‘freeing’ of various kinds of attached labour took place but without the corresponding absorption into industry: “colonised India did undergo the first phase of the European bourgeois revolutions: the undermining and breaking down of her pre-capitalist organisations, under the imperialist impact; but not the later phases of a complete reconstitution of these organisations on a more productive capitalist basis.” (Patnaik, 1990: 41) Bourgeois property relations developed but unaccompanied by development of capitalist relations. Therefore, even though there was

a large mass of wage labourers, organisation of production did not transition into the capitalist mode. Indian rural agrarian labourers became 'free' in the double sense meant by Marx, free both from being the means of production themselves (as slaves) and from nominal proprietorship (as peasants of various categories tied to the land but retaining a modicum of control over it), but since there was no parallel industrial development, they remained tied to agriculture to earn a living. Due to the already existing vast surplus of employable labour, wages remain very low. Thus, the option opened up for landowners and landlords to hire destitute labour than give out their land for tenancy. For her, this was a matter of contingent decision-making on the part of the landowner.

What differentiates the post-1950 period from the period earlier in Indian agriculture is the development of industry and a corresponding market. The creation of the urban market increased the profitability of agriculture because agricultural goods had a ready market. The creation of an industrial surplus also generated the motive to invest back into agriculture as the latter had been gaining in profitability potential. Likewise, agricultural surplus, which was during the colonial era largely used up by absentee landlords for personal or familial consumption was also put back into agriculture as productive investment. This was the real reason why many tenants began to be evicted, as landlords realised holding land by themselves and cultivating it was more profitable than to give it out on tenancy and simply draw rent. The features of profitability and investibility, therefore, mark the transition to capitalism as all the five conditions proposed by Rudra are satisfied.

Another point of dispute between Rudra and Patnaik is the scale of agricultural operations and criteria used to measure it. Lacking any operational definition of a

capitalist farmer, Rudra et al (1990) chose the above-20 acre mark as the surest place to search for capitalist dynamics. The reason for this choice was their assumption that “the intersection of the set of capitalist farms and the set of large farms [would] contain most of the elements of the set of capitalist farms.” (Rudra et al, 1990: 27). The clarification given was to the effect that though it most large-scale farms are not capitalist farms, “capitalist farms are (assumed to be, in Punjab) large.” (ibid). Against this Patnaik argued that the size of a farm could be a measure of operational scale only under conditions of agricultural stagnation, and definitely not under conditions of rapid movement in terms of technological innovation and also the growth of markets for selective crops with promises of impressive returns. She quoted the instance of an 11-acre farm (which would be classified as a medium farm) cultivating sugarcane, high-yielding paddy, maize and tapioca resulting in an annual output of Rs.50, 000, out of which Rs.20,000 was put back into the farm for productive use. By contrast, a 53-acre farm could only give rise to an output of Rs.33,000 with an inferior per acre yield ratio. Though larger in size, since the farm is held by a large joint family, only Rs.5,000 is available for investment in the farm. Finding an answer to the question of transition must be rooted in what comes *after* the transition is conceived. There is a healthy degree of consensus that the transition takes place from the pre-capitalist to the capitalist. However, what does the capitalist mode entail? Does it mean a complete breakdown of every other kind of relation and the successful polarisation of the capitalist class and the working class?

According to Rudra Agrarian transformation is characterised by complete or near complete polarisation into two main classes, capitalists and wage-labourers. Patnaik thinks not. The two propositions she sets out for consideration are: there exists among the

various classes within the non-capitalist agrarian economy, a small but growing class which may be identified as capitalist. (Patnaik, 1990). Where she differs from Rudra is the degree to which this polarisation should take place for an observer to say with any credibility that the capitalist mode of production is indeed functioning. For Rudra, since the marker for the capitalist mode is class polarisation on the basis of which he pronounced there to be inadequate evidence for a transition, the capitalist mode would be credible only when a complete polarisation will take place. A new class signifies a change in quality rather than quantity. Therefore, as long as pre-capitalist relations maintain themselves though obviously some aspects of capitalism may be present, one cannot say that any transition has taken place since there is no qualitative change such as in the emergence of a capitalist class whose capitalist credentials are beyond doubt.

Patnaik problematises this by pointing out that such a wholesome change to the entire fabric of relations has not obtained in any part of the world. The bourgeois class, as the capitalist class has been known classically in the Marxist tradition, received nurture and grew within the feudal mode of production in those parts of Europe where capitalism first became the dominant mode. Its emergence was a qualitative change but it did not coincide with a transformation of the entire framework, which was a later event. Moreover, this qualitative change has nothing to do with farm size, but with a change in the essential logic of production, in terms of who owned the means of production, who worked on these means and in what way they got to working, and how the product of this labour was divided or appropriated.

Based on the above-mentioned considerations, Patnaik drew up the existence of mainly three classes in Indian agrarian society:

1. The capitalist farmer possessing means of production and employing wage labour for profit. This is the class of 'rural bourgeoisie'. (Patnaik, 1990: 64)
2. The self-employed peasant possessing the means of production and producing with family labour, neither hiring in labour nor hiring out except to a small degree. This is the class of 'rural petit bourgeoisie'.
3. The landless peasant possessing no means of production and hiring out for wages. This is the class of 'rural proletariat'.

In addition to these three broad agrarian classes, she illuminates a wide range of categories that exists across the spectrum. She clarifies by saying "the entire agricultural population in the real world would not be exhausted by the above pure conceptual types or classes" (ibid). Since at different junctures of capitalism there is always the possibility of landlords leasing out land to petty tenants, or landlords leasing in land from small holders for whom the rent would constitute a surer source of income than cultivating the land themselves. There are also landholding households whose property is meagre, say, 1 or 2 acres of land, which is not enough to raise a substantial income and hence they may complement cultivation with subsidiary occupations. This class she terms 'semi-proletariat'. In addition, there are also rich peasants whose mode of functioning does not appropriate to the capitalist mode but who hire agricultural labourers to do a greater amount of work than they themselves do. This class she calls 'proto-bourgeoisie'.

Patnaik called out the folly of "those who try to identify the 'mode of production' in India today" as confusing a theoretical concept with a descriptive account (ibid: 3). She draws

the example of Lenin's *Development of Capitalism in Russia*⁴, a work in which the phrase 'mode of production' was not used at all. In a period when feudal relations were on the decline and capitalist relations were in an early stage of development, trying to concretely identify the mode of production would have been a distorting rather than a clarifying exercise.

The Advent of Capitalism in Indian Agriculture

The power of the merchant, usurer and moneylender grew mid-19th century onwards when laws were passed by the British to the effect that “to recover a debt, recourse can be made to the property, past, present and future, of the debtor and his family. [The creditor] is allowed by our law to recover his debt by the slave labour of his debtor . . . debtors receive less than ordinary wages for their labour . . . only bare food and clothing.”(Patnaik, 1990: 87). Since the agrarian policy introduced by the British fixed the revenue on the basis of land assessment and potential productivity rather than by real assessment of produce, this had the effect of bringing about chronic indebtedness for cultivators.

The differentiation of the peasantry, as a result, went along with a parallel dynamic of capture of agricultural land by usurers and moneylenders who used the new regulation of alienable property rights (introduced for first time in India by British) to take hold of agricultural land as compensation for the inability of peasants and cultivators to pay back the loans. As evident from historical sources, when these classes got possession of agricultural land, they were more interested in using the surplus derived from agriculture to fund their other activities than to put it back into agriculture. The peasant or the

⁴ V I Lenin, *Development of Capitalism in Russia*, 1898

cultivator who earlier had a customary right to land continued to cultivate the same land though in the form of a tenant.

Under these conditions, writes Patnaik, “the difference between the two relationships: landlord-sharecropper and big landowner-labourer, seems to have been a difference of degree rather than of kind. The same landowner might combine the two modes of exploitation and generally exactly the same primitive technical level characterised both.” (ibid: 89).

However, a distinction can be made ‘antediluvian’ forms of capital such as commodity production and exchange, usury, acquisition of land to give on tenancy and draw rent etc, and the transition of agricultural production itself to the capitalist mode (ibid: 89). While the old subsistence and revenue model was undermined by commercialisation and monetisation, the latter continued to derive products from an agrarian sector, which remained essentially pre-capitalist. Rack-renting and usury became highly lucrative economic activities, and usually preferred over turning the surplus back into agriculture. Patnaik provides two possible reasons for this trend. Firstly, it was relatively safer to go for other kinds of investments, such as usury or in whatever little scope there was in manufacturing, than to take the risk of investing on finding technically superior production techniques in agriculture. Secondly, economic growth of agriculture was minimal and returns from agriculture were comparably stagnant since there was no corresponding manufacturing industry to absorb the surplus.

In fact, agricultural stagnation in the decades leading up to Independence in 1947 is evident from the negligible increase in agricultural production, falling availability of food-grains and productivity per acre in food crops and falling area of cultivable land per

labourer. Coupled with the destruction of the rural handicraft industry, “the vast mass of peasants pauperised by imperialism had to subsist perforce on the land, progressively more underemployed and underfed.” (ibid: 90)

Jairus Banaji: The Colonial Mode of Production

Banaji's theorisation of the colonial mode of production begins by positing a distinction between relations of exploitation and relations of production. He defines relations of exploitation as, “the particular form in which surplus is appropriated from the direct producers, not in the specific form, eg. labour rent, rent in kind, but the general form, eg. serfdom, where the direct producers are tied to the means of production through some form of extra-economic coercion.” (Banaji, 1990: 120) In distinction from this, “relations of production . . . are the specific historically determined form which particular relations of exploitation assume due to a certain level of development of the productive forces, to the predominance of particular property forms (feudal landed property etc).” (ibid). The distinction is theoretically important because applying it to the mode of production debate leads to the conclusion that a particular form or relation of exploitation is not a sufficient condition to deduce the mode of production. For instance, wage labour existed outside of capitalism in the medieval and even the ancient world but this does not mean these were early signs of the development of the capitalist mode.

Following this, if one is to frame the question of transition as one from a pre-capitalist/feudal to a capitalist mode of production, then it has to be granted that capitalism developed earlier in select European centres and spread from there to the pre-capitalist world of Asia and Latin America, for instance.

Capital spread in the colonies through money and commerce rather than by industrialisation. The first feature of the introduction of capital to colonies was it was attained through circulation or exchange relations, and not by mode or relations of production: “Commercial penetration in fact intensified serfdom, as it had done in some instances during the feudal epoch in Europe,” but due to the lack of industries this did not mean absorption of ‘freed’ workers by industry. (ibid: 123)

At this point, Banaji introduces the colonial mode of production as the eclectic mix of many models combined in the creation and evolution of a single colonial system. He gives the examples of Bengal, which was “a combination of English landlordism, of the Irish middlemen system, of the Austrian system transforming the landlord into the tax-gatherer and of the Asiatic system making the state the real landlord.” (ibid: 124) In the case of ryotwari system in Madras, Bombay and adjoining Deccan lands held by the British, the ryot was “subject like the French peasant to the extortion of the private usurer; but he has no hereditary, no permanent titles in his land, like the French peasant. Like the serf he is forced to cultivation, but he is not secured against want like the serf. Like the *metayer* he has to divide his produce with the state, but the state is not obliged, with regard to him, to advance the fund and the stock, as it is obliged to do with regard to the *metayer*.” (ibid)

The corresponding transition to industrialisation in India, as already discussed, did not take place until much later and even though money and commerce expanded, India remained a predominantly agrarian country. How should this be explained? According to Banaji, the colonial mode of production – distinct by its departure from the pre-capitalist agrarian mode of production but not resulting in the emergence of substantial

industrialisation – could only have come about due to what was taking place in the capitalist centres in England and Europe generally. Capitalism as a mode of production presupposes “unlimited expansion, perpetual progress” (Lenin, 1963, 2: 164) as the law of production. It was to secure this ‘unlimited expansion’ that the bourgeoisie or class of capitalists undertook the measures that characterised the colonial economy: “colonial plunder, international lending and an intensified exploitation of the home peasantry.” (Banaji, 2010: 125). It was an elaborate process to intensify the accumulation on which the growth of European industry was dependent on. It was primary accumulation from external sources. Similar mechanisms of accumulation had been resorted to by Spain in South America. British Indian exports were used to fund the rapid industrialisation of British colonies in North America. This transferred the pressure of accumulation from the metropolitan centre of capital to the colonies without inducing any systemic transformation in the forces of production in the colonies.

The ‘super-exploitation’ that characterised the colonial mode of production, therefore, combined a number of means to exploit the indigenous populations to keep up with the continuous need for cheap labour required for primary accumulation that would feed into the metropolitan centre. There was the system of forced labour, as in the *mita* system in Peru and the *polo* system in Philippines, giving rise to corresponding landed properties of the *hacienda* and *encomienda*, as well as the *zamindari* system in India, combining the characteristics of “servile and proletarian exploitation.” (ibid: 127)

In the colonies, juridical forms unique to capitalism became instrumental in reproducing the processes of primitive accumulation through combinations of labour and resource exploitation as already discussed above. Through the reinforcement of specific colonial

relations of exploitation, “the peasantry was tied to the world market as a producer of primary goods and where the chief mode of exploitation constituted a ‘tribute’ to the colonial state.” (ibid: 127). The result was an agrarian system with two dominant features: the first was “a mass of pauperised peasants attempting to force a subsistence from soil of poor quality and with primitive techniques of production . . . [and the second was] big properties worked either by tenants tied to the soil through numerous forms of bondage or by rural wage-workers as integrated units of production.” (ibid: 127-8). The rise of what Lenin (1963) called ‘dwarf, parcellised, proletarian’ was a symptom of the growing pressure on land due to the prevalence of large estate property on the one hand, and the high level of rents and interests but low wages. The destruction of rural industries was likewise not accompanied by emergence or growth of capital industries, as most of the capital in the colonies was appropriated by the non-productive forms of circulation such as usury. This provoked and accelerated the fragmentation of landholdings.

The ‘precarious’ character of accumulation that characterised the metropolis-colony relationship was maintained by ever-increasing accumulation of primary commodities, “where periods of accumulation were abruptly followed by crisis and phases of contracted reproduction in which sharecropping or communal agriculture would re-establish themselves.” (Banaji, 2010: 129). Only when the metropolis experienced crisis of itself and the bonds of accumulation was relaxed, therefore, did indigenous manufacturing industries grow. This was because having no outlet to the metropolis, indigenous agrarian accumulation transferred to indigenous manufacturing industry. When the metropolis was experiencing a relative boom, on the other hand, the surplus rapidly disappeared and there was no scope for the growth of indigenous industry. This

colonial mode of exploitation, thus, created in India a class of ‘rural semi-proletariat’ constituted of peasants who were “either totally landless or cultivating dwarf-holdings.” (ibid). In South America and North Africa, it led to the creation of “an urban or suburban lumpen proletariat.” (ibid: 130). All these factors account for the slow development of capitalism and industrialisation and what has been called the backwardness of colonial economies.

Merchants and traders were the carriers of capitalism in the Deccan. Since the mode of production had yet to experience a sufficient transition to the capitalist mode, capital was introduced in its pure circulatory form. As Banaji (2010) points out, in the more backward regions, "'banking', 'mercantile', and 'usurer' capital were, in most cases, inseparable." The functions of the merchant, moneylender and broker were often united in the same person. This was due to the fact that such a degree of economic elaboration had not been reached which would make division of labour a bare necessity.

Farm Size and Productivity

Farm size as a criterion for measuring capacity and attributing class started with the work of AK Sen (1962), who sought to explain the higher productivity per acre of small farms when compared to big farms. The rationale is that production in big farms is carried on till marginal productivity of labour is the same as the wages to be paid according to the prevailing wage rate. On the other hand, in small farms, the marginal product remains nil or is at least less than the wage. As Paresh Chattopadhyay pointed out, “the whole argument depended on the existence of a ‘wage gap’ – in the sense of the equilibrium labour cost of in family-labour-based farms being less than the wage in the hired-labour-based farm.” (Chattopadhyay, 1990:72-3). As cautioned by Sen himself, this rationale

assumed a static basis for given inputs, and with growth and dynamism in the measure of input, the output of big farms were also likely to increase.

Writing in the 1960s, C H Hanumantha Rao favoured the family labour-based small farm due to the same principle of efficiency. He began from the assumption that input of labour and its quality is higher in tenant farms and accordingly, output per acre yield is also higher. He did not find a reason why tenants would not be led to investments in inputs like bullocks and tools if landlords shared the cost of these. In effect, he favoured a system of share-cropping where inputs would be shared by the landlord and tenant. He admitted that an agricultural model based on land ownership, even if ownership was in the form of smallholdings, would be favourable, but keeping in mind Indian agricultural history, he thought the pragmatic way is sharecropping with credit facilities for tenants. Cost sharing would be favourable for the tenant if he was able to bargain with the landowner. (Hanumantha Rao, 1968)

Chattopadhyay criticised Rao because of his favouring family labour-based small farm by pointing out that cultivators were not growing for subsistence but for exchange. Within an economy of commodity production, “the market price of his product need not be high enough to afford him [the small farmer] to afford him average profit and still left a fixed excess above this average profit in the form of rent, as there is no separate existence of a landlord. The market price of agricultural product, in this situation, need not rise either to the value or the price of production of the product.” (Chattopadhyay, 1990: 75) According to Chattopadhyay, this constitutes a kind of ‘commodity fetishism’ that overlooks the mode of production and takes efficiency to be the decisive factor in judging how agriculture should be organised. While it is true that this efficiency model would

work in the case of a natural economy where the peasant cultivates for himself and his family as much as he does to pay revenue or perhaps sell a part of his produce this, under the dominance of the market this would only lead to greater and a more thoroughgoing exploitation of the peasant that he already is undergoing.

This is because “the inevitable result of commodity production is the dependence of producers on the market. Although in the first stage of commodity production in agriculture, direct sale of products to the consumers prevails, gradually, with the increasing transformation of products into commodities, markets become wider and less localised, with a consequent rise and growth of merchants and moneylenders.” (ibid: 76) Thus, the efficiency of a small farm under conditions of commodity production and exchange really amounts to “overwork and chronic under-consumption.” (ibid.) The presence of a highly differentiated peasantry in terms of landownership, capital resources and income was clear from the expansion of the area under farming where the purpose was commodity production.

Utsa Patnaik, however, pointed to the very obvious error in equating the class of a farmer with his acreage or total area of land owned or held. She proposed a number of reasons to qualify land as a factor in class formation and differentiation. Firstly, land is heterogeneous with respect to productivity. Secondly, input of labour, measurable by worker per capita cultivating area is an important factor in the actual process of cultivation itself. Thirdly, the extent of capital investment on land may have a significant impact on productivity and total output and its quality. This may also throw up variations in the desirable worker per capita area ratio, or transform a small farm into a greater area of productivity than a relatively bigger farm. The use of large-scale irrigation combined

with high yield variety seeds, chemical fertilizers and heavy machinery raised the yield per unit of cultivated area and as a result the total output as well. The important question to be asked in an agrarian environment where the dispersal of technology has taken place across all the acreage groupings of landholdings would be about the source of investment and the distribution of the effects.

The mode of production became a focal point in the debate over transition. However, its contribution was limited due to its increasingly singular occupation with the technicalities of what constitutes a particular mode of production and the applications of these theoretical findings on India's agrarian society. But the agrarian question demands newer ways of articulation in the context of economic liberalisation in India and in the era of globalisation when surplus from agriculture is by no means the essential factor for the further development of industry; or, as observed by Bernstein, not at all a factor for industrial development.

Agrarian relations in colonial context

A similar process of dispossession and indebtedness was underway with artisans in small towns. Rising costs of subsistence and competition from machine-produced products created a spiral of low costs and debts that made wage labour a more economically viable outcome than to carry on manual production. In Kolhapur, for instance, weavers turned to wage labour, and in Nashik, weavers had to enter agriculture as tenants or field labourers to make ends meet. Given the relations of indebtedness that resulted, "it is possible to understand why even the falling costs of raw materials supplied by machine-production would scarcely have improved the fortunes of the majority of weavers, and only increased the profits of their capitalist exploiters." (Banaji, 2010: 275)

Sugarcane and groundnuts were commodities exported from Satara. These two crops required extensive irrigation facilities and large capital outlays. Sugarcane and groundnuts were exported in large quantities to Bombay, and from then on to Marseilles and Italy, where these were used in the preparation of olive oil. In Ahmednagar, vineyards took up the best soil. The European demand, therefore, had become a major factor.

The price-convergence mechanism and low level fluctuations were principally caused due to the twin factors of development of railways and the growth of a host of depots and wholesale markets. A number of small towns and large villages became nodal points and served as transit points for trading "that mediated the local, inter-district and external trade of the Deccan." (ibid: 287) Money capital, whose importance was paramount in the emergence of the trading network, flowed in through such centers and links emerged between the capital, the small trading outposts and the villages where cultivation was carried on. This facilitated the development of what may be called the 'open' market, operating through a chain of mercantile transactions. The revenue system was revised precisely on the backdrop of such a change, and the new assessment was based on a classification of villages on the strength of the level of exports.

These developments were inseparable from the transition to a capitalist economy, or to be more precise, the unique colonial mode of production, which shared with the metropolis the tendency of destruction of small producers and the rise of large landlords, big capitalist farmers and peasant-wage labourers, approximating the English system of agriculture.

The high degree of concentration of capital is borne out by the recency of the emergence of the capitalist class. It has already been mentioned that 1852-3 generally marked the advent of the commodity economy in the Deccan. In keeping with this, most of the capitalist sections had also emerged about the same time. For instance, 38% of the *sowcars* in Satara district had started business roughly around 1855. This expansion of monied capital was accompanied by a very high incidence of indebtedness or indebted families (66-90% of all households in the Deccan). (ibid: 294)

Banaji presents the class formation and social origins of the capitalist class in two "basic types: 1) Merchant-moneylending-banking businesses organized on a caste-basis, *divided internally* into a larger, town-based capital, more widespread in its range of operations, and a small 'sponsored' capital, operating locally, resident in the village itself, generally controlling a portion of its retail-trade, started with capital borrowed from kinsmen, and directly in contact with the peasantry. Secondly, moneylenders sprung from the mass of the peasantry itself, and by and large big peasants, a lot of them from Kunbi caste." (ibid: 295)

The rapid expansion of smaller *sowcars*, therefore, was structurally inseparable from the general expansion of the commodity economy. The phenomenon of 'sponsoring' capital was carried on in a caste or kin or family basis to generally extend the area of operation of capital and induce growth in the scale of business, as is still noticeable in the case of Marwari and Gujarati moneylenders who "usually begin business as clerks or servants of one of the established *sowcars*."⁵ (ibid: 296) A series of riots took place in the mid-1870s in different regions of the Deccan, in which the primary targets were

⁵ Quoted by Banaji from GBP, Satara, p 182-4

the local moneylenders rather than the Brahmin ones. Banaji attributes this to the prevailing stratification wherein the lower orders of capitalists and moneylenders came directly in contact with the people and thus were marked as exploiters.

Marwaris and Gujarati *vani* caste group, for instance, gave loans to cultivators on the condition that the crops be sold to them even before they were picked out of the ground. In Ahmednagar, where cotton cultivation was booming at the time, cotton dealers resorted to this strategy and made huge profits by obtaining the cotton from farmers. It was then sent to agents in Ahmednagar town from where it was sold to merchants in Bombay. The same caste group of *vanis* was also active in Pune from where they exported grain and garden crops, through a long but well-established chain of shops and merchants. Evidently, European presence was very limited and most of the trading was in indigenous hands at this time. This would be overturned significantly in the following decades, when foreign firms came to establish themselves and influence trading more and more.

A similar process of expropriation was underway in towns as well, as evident from the destruction of traditional artisans and small industries. There, too, the process involved an initial indebtedness caused by the inability of traditional artisans to compete with machine-made cloth and textiles and the falling prices. Moneylenders inserted themselves into the production process by advancing loans which became the necessary input for the artisan to reproduce both his productive work as well as his household. The finished article, therefore, became the commodity-capital of the capitalist rather than the producer's product. In Khandesh, Koshtis, the traditional weaving class, as a rule fell into the clasp of moneylenders, and their products were appropriated by the latter since it was

with the money advanced that they bought yarn. A similar process of class differentiation was also underway, with bigger weavers moving into a strong financial position enabling them to lend money. On the other hand, there was an intense process of proletarianisation taking place, with debt-ridden weavers working day and night but implicated in a structural process of indebtedness from which there was, realistically, no getting out.

In Nasik, the small population of silk weavers had by 1870 completely started working for capitalists. They were paid on a per piece basis, and the average annual income of a silk weaver there was Rs.80. Keeping in mind the rising cost of basic commodities, this was hardly enough for a family or a household to subsist.

The social character or mechanics of the expropriation and exploitation patterns in 19th century Deccan would, thus, be inadequately perceived if it is claimed to be a semi-feudal economy, as Bhaduri and Patnaik largely claim. What matters for Banaji in analyzing the mode of production is not the formal arrangements of exploitation but the underlying process that gives rise to social movements. Whether tenancy or sharecropping continued, therefore, is not an intelligible marker for the development of capitalist relations or otherwise. The introduction of capitalists to the Deccan region was through circulatory means of capital. In itself, this can be distinguished from the advent of relations of production.⁶ However, the continuation of semi-feudal or pre-capitalist relations of production does not mean that there has been no penetration by capital. It translates to surplus appropriation by capital but without the capitalist mode of production. Even when there is a clear lack of capitalist form of the labour process, the capitalist may very well control or command the entire production process. Such was the

⁶ Banaji distinguishes his own position from Andre Gunder Frank's position on this basis, since for the latter capitalism arrives fully on the scene as soon as circulation is introduced.

case in 19th century Deccan, where the peasant and the petty producer retained, up to a point, their independence only *externally*. Thus, the capitalist mode of production was neither dominant nor adequate in the sense that it was negligible in its surface-level development and still quite far from industrialization. However, capitalist relations of exploitation were in force since the very beginning of the expansion of the commodity economy that happened 1850s onwards.

Class differentiation in Indian agriculture

Study of peasant society with regard to agrarian economic phenomenon is of a more recent origin than caste-based or village studies. Though peasant society was a focus of study for anthropologists and sociologists it was only limited to understand caste, family and community especially in case of India. However, agrarian crisis and unrest gave impetus to study peasant society from agrarian perspective. The main preoccupation of anthropologists was studying tribal societies. And they were fascinated more with things such as totemism, marriage patterns, kinship and rituals. Sociology was a new discipline in India, and Indian scholars influenced by western sociologists began to study Indian institutions such as Hinduism, caste, family and community with similar ethnographic pre-occupation of western sociology.

Andre Beteille (1974) was a pioneer in studying agrarian/rural phenomena using class and moving away from caste/village studies. An Indian village is not only differentiated based on caste but also in terms of "ownership of land, control, and use of land so that in addition to peasant proprietors, subsisting mainly by family labour, there are other social classes both above and below. Where a community includes non-cultivating landowners

at one end and sharecroppers and landless labourers at the other, it is misleading to use the blanket term 'peasantry' to describe it." (Beteille, 1974: 25)

Andre Beteille brought a change to this and studied agrarian society from the perspective of economy, politics and stratification. He called caste a native category which, according to him, had been studied excessively, resulting in stagnation. As he had himself studied society from caste perspective, his understanding was that caste alone was not the source of inequality. Understanding many of the aspects of caste could not be possible without understanding the dynamics of property and power, for a change in the distribution of property and power brought about change in the organization of caste system. Family labour, hired labour and tenants are arranged based on the variation in patterns of work in different regions. And who does what work depends on who owns land and who does not. Most of the menial work is assigned to the lowest strata of the landless.

Pradip Kumar Bose (1989) listed three sociological approaches used in the analysis of agrarian social structure in India: tradition, native/indigenous, and class. Bose points out that the class approach attempted to analyse agrarian social structure in terms of broadly two analytic categories: distribution and structure. The basis for the analytic category of distribution is quantitative differences in the distribution of fruits of labour or to put it in simpler language, the problematic of who gets what. According to who gets what, an individual or a family may be assigned to a particular class in which all individuals or families of a similar distributional standing are grouped. One of the common methodological strategies under this approach is classifying the unit of measurement (individual, family) in terms of the total area of land owned. The structural approach

substitutes the primacy of distribution for the primacy of social relations, "particularly as these relations are related to differential control over the means of production." (Bose, 1989: 186)

Utsa Patnaik describes two types of objections that are regularly put forward about the limitations of class analysis: the first is that the complexity of India's agrarian society derives from the co-existence of pre-capitalist and incompletely developed capitalist modes of production. The second is the relevance and credibility of caste as an organizing principle of agrarian society, excluding which any analysis of agrarian society will not be able to explain "the existing social structure and its dynamics." (Patnaik, 1987: 1)

Patnaik writes that, "Concepts such as 'production relations', 'forces of production', or 'mode of production' are analytic concepts, abstracted from a study of historical reality," (ibid: 2) and are not meant to be descriptive. Therefore, what is being explained under a given mode of production, such as the feudal or the capitalist, does not correspond exactly to the empirical conditions in a village. Empirical phenomena, such as the number of usurers really existing at a given point of time in a village which may be said to be undergoing transition, do not match up in a literal sense with the 'mode'. The function of the mode is to name those minimum conditions that define the conditions of the operation of a given process of production and the social relations conditioned by it.

The question of class in the first few decades after Independence was in one way or another linked with ownership or possession of means of production. Patnaik quotes statistics from 1953-54 when the top 15% of landowners owned as much as 60% of the land, while the bottom 60% had ownership of only 6% of the land. Tenancy was

widespread and the average of the land cultivated by owners themselves amounted to only 1/5th of total land owned. (ibid: 19)

It was clear that the leasing pattern did not follow a set rationale. For instance, it was not just large holdings that were divided and rented out for cultivation by tenants. There is a record of large holdings renting in more land from small holdings. The middle and lower categories that accounted for 85% of overall holdings with 30% of the owned area had a share of 42.5% in leased out land. On average, this group put together leased out a higher percentage of land than the large holdings. Moreover, due to the extreme fragmentation and the politically sensitive nature of tenancy and landowning, it has not been easy to establish who leases out to whom.

The top 15% of the landholdings in terms of size had a very clear economic strength. These comprised the bulk of means of agricultural production, as well as of non-land assets like livestock, buildings, mechanisation and other facilities. In spite of the small decline in concentration of land ownership between 1947 and the middle of the 1980s, there was a significant increase in the number and proportion of landless labourers working for wages in agriculture.

The high degree of concentration in possession of means of production translated to “a correspondingly high degree of economic differentiation within the cultivating population,” (Patnaik, 1987: 20) though there lack of a homogenous or ‘representative’ type of holding. In the case of large landholding families, family labour was inadequate and these holdings primarily depended on wage labour. On the other end of the scale of landowners were the small cultivators or peasants for whom the amount of land owned

was insufficient to engage the entire labour capacity of the family or derive a sufficient income, and these families invariably went to work on others' fields to work for a wage.

In agriculture, Patnaik notes, "the middle category of producers may be expected to be fairly numerous: it consists of those who possess sufficient means of production to make a living primarily through the self-employment of family labour, neither employing the labour of others to any substantial extent nor being obliged to work for others." (ibid: 22)

The 'peasant' in agrarian studies is something approximating this figure that has been described: "a petty producer who is wholly self-employed, neither exploiting, nor being exploited." (ibid) This readily brings to mind Chayanov's model of the peasant economy.

Daniel Thorner is one such thinker who has forwarded this category as a dominant one in Indian agriculture. One can also think of the American model of family based farms which predominantly produced for the market as another variation of this. (ibid)

But from examination of Indian sources, what becomes clear is that a majority of holdings are so small that they do not fall under this category and a majority of these landholders have to find some subsidiary occupation to increase the family income. Statistically, they do not form the most representative category of farmers by any stretch of imagination.

The process through which Indian agriculture turned into a predominantly commodity producing economy could be explained by the manner in which fixed revenue was imposed and the rigidity with which it was collected, the resulting indebtedness of farmers from trying to meet the exorbitant revenue demand and the window opened for merchants and usurers as a result of increasing monetization of the economy and necessity for loans. Commodity production and exchange relations became constitutive

of the colonial economy which placed the burden on farmers to cultivate cash crops for export. Patnaik calls this "a process of forced commercialization for the majority of the peasants." (ibid: 23) There was an accompanying de-peasantization (due to loss of land) and pauperization at a massive scale. But under the conditions of colonial economy, there nonetheless emerged a class of peasants who were richer in monetary terms and also had access to greater amounts of land and market. This shows a marked tendency to class differentiation within the colonial economy itself when judged by the criteria of possession of land and other means of production, hiring labour and taking rent, and the ability of a household to meet its expenses and the resulting indebtedness.

In the 1980s, agriculture in India showed a marked drift to capitalist mode of productions. However, the landlord continued to be a major figure in agrarian society due to the prevalence of petty tenancy, rack renting and usury, practiced in many instances by the landlord himself. But India's geographical size and vast regional diversity makes any representative notion or characterization of agriculture a difficult and vulnerable exercise. Still, the 'pure' middle farmer or one who does not either hire or work for others is an elusive category, especially in the more recent time when subsidiary occupations have become somewhat of a norm for small peasants and their families.

Agrarian Questions Today

The first agrarian question is what has been termed 'class forces agrarian question'. (Akram-Lodhi & Kay, 2010: 266) Derived mainly from the work of Byres, it argues that "imperialism did, in some respects and instances, introduce capitalist relations of production and dynamic processes of labour commodification in the rural economies of Asia, Africa and Latin America, through the use of coercion, as labour regimes were

reconfigured." (ibid) But at the same time, this "was by no means universal." (ibid) To reinforce capitalist accumulation in Europe, it was not always the case that colonized regions were subjected to a coerced transition of agrarian relations. In many regions, "imperialism reinforced pre-existing pre-capitalist class relations in an effort to sustain surplus appropriation by dominant class forces from subordinate classes, particularly petty commodity producing peasants." (ibid) In other parts, a partial transformation agrarian relations took place. Byres' point revolved around his hypothesis of multiple forms of transition, rather than a dominant conception of it. The actual modality of the transition depends as much on the national sovereignty factor as on the process of class formation and differentiation within the peasantry.

Central to Byres' thesis on the agrarian question is a critique of the limitations of an approach that views agrarian transition as successful if some certain provisions are met. In his account, he stresses that an expansion of the number of ways in which agrarian transition may take place has to be appreciated, if only to make sense of developments in the emerging economies of Asia, Latin America and Africa. In the context of capitalist and post-capitalist economies, a number of ways to transition are possible and the mediation of this process is to a large extent bound up with national sovereignty, or the politics between dominant and subordinated classes as well as within subordinated classes. As Bernstein summarized, Byres' work on the agrarian question may be usefully divided into the themes of accumulation, production and politics.

The second agrarian question is Bill Warren's account of path dependency. The argument is that imperialism introduced uneven capitalist relations of production globally which "unleashed an inexorable, if contingent, dynamic process of labour commodification that

is ongoing everywhere across developing capitalist countries." (ibid: 266) This signaled an irreversible transformation of the mode of agrarian production which eventually resulted in the emergence of labour power as a commodity. The path dependency relates to the introduction of this logic of production which determines the eventual fate of rural demography.

The third rendition of the agrarian question is the decoupling approach. It is one of the more recent interpretations of the agrarian question is the 'decoupled agrarian question of labour' (ibid: 267) as developed by Bernstein. In a departure from the classical problematic of how agriculture provides the surplus required for industrialization, Bernstein has been of the opinion that the relevance of agrarian capital has withered in the era of global finance capital. Even in the 1950s and 1960s, the stress was completely on how a state can design a developmental regime built from the surplus derived from agriculture. But since the advent of the neo-liberal era, developmental agenda can be effectively funded through raising international loans or inviting foreign capital in a diversity of ways to pave the way for capitalist and post-capitalist development. In the absence of the concern for providing the requisite surplus, another aspect of the agrarian question has been gaining in importance. This is "that of labour, which is struggling to construct a livelihood in the face of the development of the productive forces of capital." (ibid) Due to the by-passing of the economic question of surplus requirement, the political question of development has come to take precedence with regard to the agrarian question. It is now much more about the ownership and access of subordinate groups to social production.

The fourth rendition of the agrarian question is sourced from the work of Farshad Araghi who finds the present neo-liberal arrangements to be quite similar those existing in between 1834 to 1873, the first great expansion of world capitalism and industry. The similarities he lists between the two periods of classical liberalism and contemporary neo-liberalism may be brought under the heads of "economic liberalism, anti-welfarism, free market fetishism, and designs for constructing a global division of labour using 'sweatshops of the world'." (ibid) To grasp his account one must comprehend the functioning of the 'Enclosure food regime'. Subsidisation of consumption and even over-consumption of the global north has given rise to a world system where value is globally produced and distributed. The corollary of the over-consumption of the global north is the chronic dispossession of mainly rural agriculture-based classes, which creates the pulls for migration. This is where rural politics of the dispossessed gains its relevance and urgency. Due to the violent process of dispossession, more and more people are converted into a reserve for labour, something that has been understood in the Marxian sense as the reserve army of the unemployed. This predictably brings down the value and cost of labour, and increases the rate at which relative surplus value is extracted.

The fifth rendition of the agrarian question comes from Philip McMichael's account of the 'corporate food regime agrarian question'. (ibid: 288) The global politics of food and broadly the food market cannot be grasped without a thorough understanding and appreciation of the world-historical significance of finance capital which embeds diverse regions into the circulatory matrix. Therefore, the agrarian question of the global age is really the agrarian question of food. The food regime is totally privatized and works for maximization of profits rather than driven by any sense of equitable distribution. The free

market of the more advanced regions, even within the same country, is sustained by the rapid rate of dispossession taking place in agrarian society. For this reason, McMichael also prioritizes the political dimension of the agrarian question as being central to the construction of class struggle politics to challenge the extremely narrow accumulatory character of the corporate food regime.

The sixth agrarian question is derived from Bridget O' Laughlin's work (2009) that has argued for recognizing the gender dynamics of the agrarian question. Production, accumulation and politics of the rural bears a direct impact on the reproduction of rural households. Therefore, integrating the gender question into the agrarian question is necessary if fundamental contradictions arising from gender dynamics are to be avoided in trying to answer the agrarian question.

Finally, the seventh agrarian question is the one of ecology. Akram-Lodhi and Kay list the works of Piers Blaikie (1985), Tony Weis (2005), Michael Watts (2009) and John Bellamy Foster (2009) as important contributions for the development of this line of interpretation. (ibid: 269) What is termed as agro-ecological setting and relations relates to the whole gamut of techniques, technology and mode of producing agricultural products that include food and non-food commodities. These have a decisive influence on production and class formation. Failing to address the ecological dimension of agrarian production may very well result in lop-sided answers to the agrarian question.

In the neo-liberal impasse of the 21st century, the mechanisms underlying farm economy have changed significantly. The issues of the rural proletariat and migration caused by chronic dispossession are to an extent overshadowed by what has been happening in global capitalism in the wake of the collapse of the welfare state. The restructuring

brought about by neo-liberal arrangements does not always have to do with expansion of labour as a commodity. Different purposes of production are increasingly popping out of the neo-liberal horizon: from meeting domestic demand and supplementary exports, the market universe of the global food regime is producing more and more to meet very specific export demands. This has changed the character of agrarian accumulation and therefore, has to be accounted for in any attempt to formulate and answer the agrarian question.

Given this context of multiple agrarian questions and transitions in the era of neo-liberal globalization, Bernstein's formulation of the agrarian question stressed the bypassing of the classical agrarian question which is fundamentally linked with the problem of capital in agriculture. Under neo-liberal economic conditions, capitalist development in the global South does not have to depend on surplus provided by agriculture as this void can be filled by global finance capital. Therefore, for him, the agrarian question has now turned into the question or problem of labour, which in the classical question was subsumed within the problem of capital.

According to him, when neo-liberal globalization became the dominant model of economic organisation, agrarian society lost its isolated autonomy in the face of capital flows and labour processes whose source was outside agriculture. Explicating this development, Bernstein distinguishes between “farming and the “agricultural sector” in both economic and political terms. The agricultural sector can include “agrarian capital beyond the countryside,” that is, investment in land and farming by urban businesses (including politicians, civil servants, military officers and affluent professionals) as well as by corporate agro-food capital.” (Bernstein, 1991: 110)

Bernstein also notes the “fluid social boundaries” (ibid) characterising the two classes of rural labour – the landless labourers and the poor peasants who also do petty wage work because farming cannot supply them with means of livelihood. Both categories are employable in the village itself by capitalist or bigger farmers, and both also provide supplies of labour to distant places through seasonal migration. There are, therefore, classes of rural labour who directly or indirectly depend on wage work, or on selling their labour power – for the reproduction of their life. Spending cuts by states in the neo-liberal era adds to their impoverishment. This is the growing class of rural informal labourers, not entirely dispossessed of their means of production but not possessing sufficient means to produce with any purpose.

Marginal farming is a form of activity of this class of dispossessed owners who “pursue their reproduction through insecure, oppressive and typically increasingly scarce wage employment and/or a range of likewise precarious small-scale and “informal economy” survival activity.” (ibid: 111) In the countries of the global South, a variety of factors are converging to accelerate this process of dispossession and class differentiation to such an extent that, according to Bernstein, “it is difficult to adhere to any notion of farmers – whether described as “peasants”, family farmers” or “small farmers” – as a single class and moreover, constituted as a class through any common social relation with capital.” (ibid: 113)

The present study is not a 're-study' in any sense. There is a significant shift in occupations among different castes groups. Participation in rural non-farm employment has increased tremendously among the Scheduled Caste (SC) workers from 20% in 1993-94 to 36% in 2009-10. SCs' share in construction sector has increased from 5.1% in

1993-94 to 15.8% in 2009-10. Their participation in agriculture is lesser than that of OBCs and OCs who account for 67.9% and 65.3% respectively. STs' participation is also increasing in rural non-farm employment, but slowly, from 13% to 20%. (Reddy et al, 2014)

Given the context of neo-liberal globalization, increase in small farms, increase in the share of non-farm work and the difficulty in assigning clear-cut socio-economic categories of rural population, the present study proposes to explore the new and emerging context in which the older categories do not capture the current agrarian scenario.

1.3 Objectives of the study

1. To understand the processes of agrarian transition that is underway in the context of small farm agriculture
2. To map out the growing class of rural informal labourers and their condition of household reproduction.
3. To analyse the role of caste and class in determining occupational mobility away from agriculture.

1.4 Methodology

The research is based on a field study of the village Kotha Armur in Nizamabad district of Telangana State (undivided Andhra Pradesh at the time of the fieldwork). The fieldwork extended beyond the immediate environment of the village to the neighbouring town and villages.

The village of Kotha Armur was selected based on the 1961 Census monograph, which included Kotha Armur as one of the villages on which detailed monographs were produced. The Census study adopted certain criteria to select the villages. Kotha Armur was selected for the survey because it was a "village of a fair size, of an old and well-settled character containing variegated occupations and multi-ethnic in composition" (1961 Census Monograph on Kotha Armur) and it was also "quite untarnished by any great urban influence and is a typical village of the rural tract." (ibid)

My field study involved collecting data pertaining to occupations of members of households, apart from data on education and land ownership. The field study was conducted in the years between 2009 and 2011, and in 2018. Armur is the nearest town and also the headquarters of the mandal in which Kotha Armur falls. Data on almost all the households in the village was collected.

When I went to the village of Kotha Armur for the first time, it was difficult for me to 'locate' the village. I first reached Armur and asked people for directions to Kotha Armur village. People at the bus station did not know about this village. From the 1961 Census monograph, it could be discerned that Kotha Armur was near the village of Perkit, and using this information I was able to reach the village. On asking to be directed towards the Kotha Armur Gram Panchayat Office, I realized that it was the Perkit Gram Panchayat Office. Kotha Armur is a revenue village and not a separate administrative village, being a part of the Perkit Gram Panchayat.

Data pertaining to individuals and households were collected. Data was collected on 507 working men 475 working women in the village. Data on occupations of the individuals, landholding of the households were collected.

The village did not correspond to its description presented in the 1961 Census monograph, having undergone significant changes in terms of both its internal landscape and isolation. The village was located at an intersection of two national highways with high frequency of traffic, with shops and establishments at the junction to serve the vehicular traffic. With this first impression, there was considerable doubt whether this village could indeed be selected for a village study due to its proximity to the town and the highways. The two villages of Kotha Armur and Perkit are inter-connected without any recognizable line of demarcation. Thus, the village Kotha Armur itself had to be 'discovered' with some effort. With the help of a local who was an elected member of the Panchayat Office, I was able to become acquainted with the people in the village over a period of first three months of the fieldwork and then I started to interact and collect data. The fieldwork was not continuous but involved repeated visits to the village and stayed at a rented residence during which time the data was collected. Kotha Armur has a considerable population who are landless and not engaged in agriculture. This led me to look into the occupational structure and diversification.

1.5 Limitations of the study

Studying a village like Kotha Armur where the pace of change is rapid in terms of the growth of nearby town which is expanding into the village, it is difficult to grasp the process of transition in a rapidly changing agrarian structure in the village. This village is situated on the highway and is close to a town, and may, therefore, not be representative of villages farther away from towns.

This study does not exhaust all possible aspects of the village to study. The attempt was to study changing occupational structure. Therefore, it did not focus on any one particular

sector, especially agriculture. The focus was on the shift away from agriculture and the diversification of rural economy.

1.6 Structure of the study

The first chapter introduces the theoretical framework by surveying the literature on agrarian transition and engages with debates on the Agrarian Question. It considers the paths of transition and brings in new debates and interpretations in this field. It sets out the objectives, methodology and limitations of the study.

The second chapter traces historically the agrarian structure in Telangana. It first gives an account of agrarian relations in the Nizam-ruled Hyderabad State and then discusses the process of change since its integration into the Indian Union and merger with Andhra Pradesh.

The third chapter presents a village profile of Kotha Armur village. Records from previous surveys have been reviewed from the points of view of land structure, tenancy, irrigation and indebtedness.

The fourth chapter presents findings from the village and contains an analysis of the same. It captures the agrarian transition under way in terms of changes in occupational structures, with respect to landholding patterns, cultivation. The chapter discusses the non-farm employment available in the context of changing agrarian relations. Labour migration to Gulf countries and the household beedi industry are predominant in this village and have been discussed in detail.

The final chapter summarises the findings of the study and concludes with the key arguments.

Chapter 2

Agrarian Structure of Telangana: A Historical Account

Introduction

This chapter gives a historical account of agrarian structure in Telangana. The village Kotha Armur is in Nizamabad district in Telangana State. The region was part of the Nizam ruled Hyderabad State till 1948, when it joined the Indian Union. In 1956, Telangana region of Hyderabad State was merged with the Andhra region of Madras State to form the linguistic state of Andhra Pradesh.

In 2014, Telangana became a separate state. In this chapter, the agrarian structure of Telangana region is traced from when it was part of Hyderabad State to when it was part of Andhra Pradesh up to its separation and attainment of independent state status.

2.1 Historical context

In 1901, Hyderabad state covered an area of 82,000 square miles with a population of 11.1 million. By 1951, the population grew to 18.6 million. The state comprised of primarily 3 linguistic regions of Marathawada, Telangana and Kannada.

Land under the Nizam-ruled state of Hyderabad was divided into three types:

Diwani or khalsa land was land owned by the government and cultivators on this land paid revenue directly to the treasury. In 1901, 20 million acres were under Diwani land. Out of a total of 22,457 villages in Hyderabad State, 13,961 belonged to this category. Its share in total land was 60%. The land tenure system for Diwani lands was *raiyyatwari*, as settled by the Land Revenue Act of 1317 Fasli or 1907. This legislation was introduced to

legally recognise cultivators as occupants. The terms ‘registered’ occupant’, *pattedar* and *khatedar* were used to denote the owner-cultivator. Occupation was of four types – the owner who was self-cultivator, the *pot pattedari* system or sharecropping with a tenant, the *sikmidari* system or tenancy, and the *asami sikmidari* system or tenant-at-will who did not have even nominal claims to the land and could be evicted at will by the landlord.

Jagir or *paigah* or *samsthan* or *inam* land was the land given to a lord (a soldier, government official or close to the Nizam) by the Nizam over which the former had full jurisdiction to govern and draw revenue. In effect, the *jagirdar* was the tax-collector based on his ownership of land. All cultivators on *jagir* lands were tenants of the *jagirdar*. Under this category of land, there were 6535 out of 22,457 villages. *Jagirs* were abolished on 15th August, 1949 by the Abolition of Jagirs Regulation, and the land under it was transferred to diwani or state lands.

The third type of land was *sarf-e-khas* land belonging to the Nizam as his private property. The villages under it numbered 1961 out of 22,457, or 10% of the total land under the state. The revenue drawn from these lands was singularly used for the consumption of the royal Nizam family. It was abolished in 1949 after the integration of the Hyderabad state into the Indian Union, and the introduction of the Privy Purse to erstwhile princes, and the land under *sarf-e-khas* was also transferred under diwani land.

2.1 Concentration of land ownership

The Hyderabad Land Revenue Act of 1907, as mentioned above, recognised the legal right of cultivators by establishing a direct contact between the government and the cultivator. Under the Survey and Settlement system, the *raiyyat* was placed in a direct

revenue relationship with the state. For this purpose, the state began an extensive renewal of land records to update them. It set off a race among village elders and local officials to enlist as much land as possible in their own names, sometimes resorting to outright fraudulence by taking advantage of peasants' ignorance passing off land belonging to them in their own names.

Along with registering land in their own names, landlords also began acquiring land from peasants on pretexts of non-payment of taxes, defaulting on loans, refusal to fulfil labour obligations (*vetti*) and the inability to pay fines imposed.

The massive concentration of land meant that settled peasants became tenants on lands which they had cultivated as their own previously. It also gave rise to a class of non-cultivating and absentee landlords for whom land acted as a commodity and the surplus received from rent and taxes on the land was used to finance other concerns apart from agriculture.

To this extent, the intended purpose of recognising cultivators backfired and led to a situation of severe concentration of land, especially by the *deshmukhs* and *deshpandes*. Landlords profited from the very measures that were introduced to act as a check on them. Eventually, the processes related to the concentration of land would become inextricably linked to peasant unrest and the Telangana peasant revolution of the 1940s.

2.3 Tenancy relations in Hyderabad State

Three types of tenants existed in the Hyderabad State under Nizam rule: the *pot-pattedar*, *sikmidar* and *asami sikmidar*.

The *pot-pattedar* was a sharecropper cultivating the land along with the landowner, expenses divided and paying rent either in cash or in kind.

The *sikmidar* was a tenant with a nominal claim to the land under him. He and his family could not be evicted as long as rent obligation was being met. Rent was likewise paid in cash or kind.

The *asami sikmidar* was a tenant-at-will, a tenant with no nominal holding rights to land and perennially at danger of being evicted.

Three methods of rent payment by the tenant were current: crop share, money rent and fixed grain rent.

Crop sharing or *batai* was the method under which a fixed share of the total yield was stipulated as the rent payable to the landlord.

The money rent system was based on cash payments to the landowner as rent.

The fixed grain rent system stipulated a certain amount of grain to be fixed as the rent regardless of the total yield or output. The difference between crop sharing and fixed grain methods of rent was that the crop sharing system took into account the total yield of a given rent period, while the fixed grain system placed the demand on the tenant to pay a fixed amount of grain regardless of the total yield in the rent period.

As commodification of land intensified and land began to be valued progressively higher throughout the second half of the 19th century, the system of *asami sikmidari* also expanded the capacity of landowners and landlords to charge higher rent. Competition strengthened the position of the landholder but eroded traditional hereditary rights of

peasant cultivators. The Famine Commission of 1879 had mentioned the widespread practice of rack-renting leading to the severe impoverishment of a class of cultivators which did not own any land and paid high rents to landlords.

The effect of the ongoing concentration of the land was absentee rentier landlordism and the consequent formation of a class of tenants who cultivated the land without having any claims to it. The two Iyengar surveys carried out in 1929-30 and 1949-51 reserved separate sections to discuss tenancy and the problems faced by tenants.

Rent receivers increased in the first two decades of the 20th century at a rapid rate though the actual number of cultivators stayed more or less the same in Hyderabad State. This is probably due to the twin reasons of cultivators with some substantial amount of land giving their lands on tenancy, and also the withdrawal from agriculture of many small peasants who may have become agricultural wage labourers or migrated to other parts of India for casual wage labour.

In the east and north, covering mainly the Telangana districts, rent was low due to the lack of competition as well as low yields and insufficient development of means of transportation for profitable distribution.

In the 1929 Iyengar survey, landless tenants made up about 31% of the total tenants, while the rest were tenants in addition to being landowners. In the 1949 survey carried out by the same surveyor, landless tenants made up 46.6%, indicating a considerable increase in landless tenancy “involving inevitably adverse influence on efficiency of cultivation.” (Iyengar 1951: 55) Tenancy was more or less at par in dry, wet and garden

lands. In the case of dry land, in 1949, tenancy was highest in the district of Hyderabad measuring at 51.9% and the lowest at Medak measuring at 5.4%.

77.7% of the tenants were tenants-at-will or *asami sikmidars* in 1949, while the corresponding figure for 1929 was 76%. In the district of Bhir, there was 100% tenancy-at-will in 1949, and it was lowest in Osmanabad at 62.7%. This shows the extent to which tenants lacked negotiating power with landlords, since tenants-at-will designated those who lacked the most nominal claims on land they cultivated.

The Hyderabad Tenancy and Agricultural Lands Act of 1950 contained provisions for the naturalization of tenants and their legal safeguard against predatory tendencies by landlords. The legislation itself was part of a response to the agitation and rural insurgency movement that had been sweeping large parts of Telangana since the middle of the 1940s. It sought to give the tenant “certain negotiable rights and also facilities his buying up the present non-cultivating landholders under certain conditions.” (ibid: 58)

In 1929, cash rents comprised about 55% and crop rents about 29% of the total rent paid by tenants to landlords. In 1949, crop rents experienced a significant increase, “partly on account of the rise in agricultural prices, partly on account of the tenant’s anxiety to provide himself with grain both for subsistence and for the Government levy.” (ibid) However, cash rents still predominated the districts of Hyderabad, Adialabad, Nalgonda and Karimnagar because in these districts a large majority of the landlords were town dwellers with little interest in cultivation except for the rent generated from the agricultural land owned by them.

The report of the Hyderabad Tenancy Committee, published in 1939, drew attention to differential rents in play in different regions of the Hyderabad State. For instance, in the Marathwada region, the rent was double or more than double the revenue payable by the owner to the state as land tax, but in the Telangana region, rent was only about 50% more than the revenue. This is explainable by the differential assessment made on the two regions. Marathwada contains higher soil fertility and thus the valuation of assessment is higher.

2.4 Agricultural labour

Iyengar began the chapter on 'Agricultural Labour' in the 1949 survey by clarifying the status of labour in his enquiry. It was to include 'only labour on the land' (ibid: 210) Wages were higher for special or seasonal work such as during the periods of planting and harvesting.

In the 1929-30 survey conducted by Iyengar, the proportion of landless labourers in the total population was at around 30%, and S.M. Bharucha's 1936-37 figure was 37%. In 1949, Iyengar calculated the proportion of landless labourers at 18.6%. The decrease in the proportion of agricultural wage labourers in the 15 preceding years was attributed by Iyengar to migration to non-farm work, migration to cities and conversion into tenant farmers.

Class differentiation in the Deccan region had given rise to widespread absentee landlordism and tenancy from the second half of the 19th century. At the bottom of the socio-economic hierarchy stood agricultural labourers who did not own land of their own.

In the 1901 Census survey, the population of farm labourers or farm servants was recorded to be 10, 23,643 or 23.07% of the total population. In the 1911 Census, their population was recorded as 27, 88,312, a massive increase in just ten years. In the 1921 Census, this number fell to 17, 63,562 or 28.75%, but again increased to 38% of the total population in 1931.

Three labour employment systems were current in the pre-Independence period:

- (1) *Vetti*, or *yetti*, was the system of labour exploitation predominant in *jagir* or *inam* lands in which the settler was given a portion of the *inam* land by the *jagirdar* on the condition of service to be yielded to the *jagirdar* or the landlord. *Vetti* was of two types, one in which no payment was given for labour, and the other in which payment was given through a share on the total plough. *Vetti* was not limited to agricultural labour but extended to all other kinds of work within the village. These included doing the household work of the landlord or other village officials, drawing water, carrying *palkis* or palanquins of rich villagers as well as rendering the services of cobblers, blacksmiths, pottery, carpenters, barbers and shepherds. Apart from the daily duties, there was also the special duty of attending to visiting official dignitaries or guests of the landlord or other high-ranking villagers. The Madiga caste in Telangana and the Mahar caste in Marathwada – both untouchable castes – were often the recipients of the most inferior jobs. Thus, a caste dimension to *vetti* system can be inferred from this. Iyengar was of the opinion that *vetti* form of labour was far more exploitative and degrading than any form of exploitation present in the English manorial system,

since *vetti* was based on “livery obligations without security.” (Dhanagare, 1983: 85)

(2) *Jeethagadu* or *bhagela* was a system of attached labour that existed till the mid-1940s. Payment was in money or kind, and it was lesser if it was paid on a monthly basis. The attachment of the labourer to the landlord was extracted on the basis of a debt which due to its internal arrangements became an impossibility for the labourer to pay. In many cases, a large debt was contracted to fund a marriage of children, in which case the debt was inherited by the new family which came into being due to the assistance of the landlord. Interest was not charged on the periodical amount payable by the debtor to the landlord but if the labourer wanted to end his obligation to the landlord, the principle sum along with an interest contracted from the very beginning of the debt period was charged. As the labourer was in no position to ever pay back the debt, his attachment was likely to be lifelong. The obligation was deemed to be over at death, except in cases where the debt had been inherited by the next generation. Lifelong poverty and indebtedness was chronic to this class of labourers, spending as many as 40 years or, in some cases, generations in a debt trap. Failure to comply with conditions imposed by the landlord resulted in eviction of the labourer from the village. This compelled the *bhagela* in a major way to accept the unfairness of the terms. In the 1929 survey report published by Iyengar, both the *vetti* and *bhagela* systems were considered by the author to be the remnants of a backward form of social organization.

(3) The class of coolies or daily wage labourers formed the third group of agricultural labourers in rural Deccan. On account of not being tied by obligation to a particular landlord, they were free to exercise their mobility to look for work opportunities. However, Bharucha in his 1937 publication mentioned that they hardly ever utilized this freedom of mobility. Coming from lower castes, they lived on the periphery of the villages, their agricultural work consisted primarily of transplanting, weeding and harvesting. In addition to agricultural work, they did odd jobs like carrying messages and working on private or government projects. The payment of their wages was in most cases by grain. The daily wage rate for a male was reported to be about 3 times higher for that of a woman in 1936-37. (Bharucha, 1937) Wages were paid in both cash and kind or a mixture of the two. Non-cash payments included stipulated share of crop, meals, footwear, clothing and tobacco. The economic depression hitting the region in 1929-30 caused wages to go down. However, beginning from the early 1940s, the Telangana rural struggle for emancipation from landlords created conditions for increase in wages. The wage paid by grain increased double or even triple in some areas during the movement. However, rise in wages was accompanied by increase in livelihood costs, for which there was, “good ground to believe that the increase in money incomes has not kept pace with the increase in the cost of living, and thus has led to a deterioration in the standard of life in this ‘class, and increased borrowing on the basis of a steep rise in the standard of expectations.” (Iyengar, 1951: 218-9) By 1949, the grain-as-wage payment was being substituted by cash payment. Iyengar notes that the traditional system of making grain payments was

not “working smoothly nowadays, especially as regards the *madiga*, the poorer class peasants have taken to payment in cash for actual service availed of by them as and when necessary.” (ibid: 222)

2.5 Occupations

Iyengar surveyed 118 villages between 1949 and 1951. The total number of households in all these villages combined was 36,013. Out of these, 23,192 families depended fully or mainly on cultivation. Only 3,509 households held subsidiary occupations alongside agriculture. 3,589 households had non-agricultural occupations as their main occupation and cultivated as a subsidiary occupation. 9,232 households depended entirely on non-agricultural work. (Iyengar, 1951: 51)

The break-up of cultivators in terms of ownership status offered by Iyengar reads:

“14,172 cultivating occupants, 2,307 landless tenants and 6,713 landless cultivating labourers, constituting respectively 61.1, 10.0 and 28.9 per cent.” (ibid: 54) The important distinction between the second category of landless tenants and third category of landless cultivating labourers was based on the provisions of the Tenancy and Agricultural Lands Act of 1949, which “proposes to afford facilities only for the second category, constituting ten per cent according to the present Enquiries and leaves out of account 28.9 per cent landless cultivating labourers, just for the reason that they have not been able to secure lands either by inheritance or by tenancy contracts.” (ibid)

In the case of non-agricultural occupations, public services formed the single greatest employer in 1949. Out of 3,509 households engaged in non-agricultural work, 581 were public servants in various capacities. By contrast, traditionally important professions like

hand-weaving and hand-spinning were severely under-represented, with a total tally of just 81 households. Every other non-agricultural work engaged more households than weaving and spinning, with businesses being the main occupation for 464 families, cobblery of 285, cattle and sheep farming of 284 and cart hiring of 275. (ibid: 256)

2.6 1956 to present

Prasad (2015) divides the agrarian history post-Independence Andhra Pradesh into four phases: “from 1956 to mid-1960s; mid-1960s to late-1970s; early-1980s to mid-1990s; and the last is from 1995 to 2014.” (Prasad, 2015: 77)

According to Prasad, the first phase was the stage of state-led development through land reforms and the provision of canal irrigation facilities. The second phase was when Green Revolution technology was introduced to increase productivity. The third phase was the extension of Green Revolution technology to non-irrigated regions. The fourth and final phase was marked by introduction of neo-liberal economic policies, agrarian crisis and the steep rise in land prices.

In Andhra Pradesh, along with other states, farmer suicides began to be reported in mass numbers from the early part of the decade of the 2000s. The reasons for the crisis are many and varied: “the changed pattern of landholdings; changed cropping pattern due to a shift away from light crops to cash crops; liberalisation policies which prematurely pushed Indian agriculture into the global markets without a level-playing field; heavy dependence on high-cost paid out inputs; growing costs of cultivation; volatility of crop output; market vagaries; lack of remunerative prices; indebtedness; neglect of agriculture

by the government; decline of public investment; break up of joint families; individualisation of agricultural operations.” (Suri, 2005: 1524)

Since united Andhra Pradesh (1956-2014) was a state created from the merger of two regions, the Telangana region of Hyderabad State and Andhra region of Madras State, it carried a history of two trajectories of land structures and reforms. Legislation had been introduced in both the states immediately after Independence to abolish estates and *jagirs* and give land rights to holding cultivators. Similar attempts were also made to recognise rights of tenants.

The early attempts at land reform in united AP concerned “abolition of intermediaries, tenancy reforms, ceiling legislation and other government initiatives.” (Reddy, 2006: 47) The AP Tenancy Act of 1956 tried to give, with mixed results, legal protection to about 6 lakh tenants holding about 75 lakh acres (33% of total agricultural land) against being evicted arbitrarily.

Around the time of its inception in 1956, there was extreme concentration of land ownership and inequality in landholding. The top 20% of the landowners owned more than 80% of the total land owned, whereas the bottom 50% owned a meagre 1%.

The AP (Ceiling on Agricultural Holdings) Act of 1973 distributed about 5.82 lakh acres among 4.79 lakh beneficiaries from SC and ST groups. Government lands were assigned to landless poor. According to D N Reddy, “Though the ceilings legislation did not have substantial impact in terms of redistribution of land, it did act as a constraint on the acquisition of more land by the rich farmers.” (ibid: 137-8)

Table 2.1 DISTRIBUTION OF LAND HOLDINGS IN ANDHRA PRADESH

Size Group	1956			2000-01		
	No. of Holdings (in Lakhs)	Operated Area (Lakh hectares)	Average Size (hectares)	No. of Holdings (in Lakhs)	Operated Area (Lakh hectares)	Average Size (hectares)
Marginal	16.38	8.16	0.50	70.23	31.04	0.44
Small	7.75	10.00	2.22	14.24	37.95	1.42
Semi Medium	7.53	16.69	2.22	14.24	37.95	2.67
Medium	7.11	29.04	4.08	5.01	28.55	5.70
Large	3.69	39.48	10.70	0.66	10.80	16.34
Total	42.46	103.37	2.43	115.32	143.99	1.25

Source: GoAP – DES (2005)

Historically, the political mobilisation of the rural peasant classes, especially in the Naxalite era and during the period of armed insurgency in the 1940s and 1950s, has been of enormous significance for peasant politics. By effectively stopping the continued acquisition and concentration of land by big and rich farmers and fostering a politics of distribution, it pushed the richer farmers to abandon land concentration in favour of better opportunities in the non-farm sector. This is linked to the mass exodus of families belonging to erstwhile landowning groups to cities. Dominant landowning caste groups of the past – Kamma, Reddy, Velama, Raju – have all experienced decrease in their landholdings, whereas OBC groups have emerged as the most numerous landowners in several villages and regions in Telangana, and SCs also to a lesser extent. However, the holdings are much more fragmented and individually smaller than they used to be.

All this has resulted in an exponential increase in the share of the area under small and marginal holdings and now these comprise slightly more than half of the total operated agricultural area. As a corollary to this, the average size of the large farm has fallen and so has its share in the total cropped area. Small and semi-medium farms have grown close to double over the period between 1970s and the 2000s. All India, in the period from, “1950-51 to 2003-4, the percentage of net irrigated area to net cultivated area increased from around 17 to 41. During the same period, fertilizer consumption showed a significant rise from less than 1 kg/ha to 90 kg/ha. Similarly, the percentage of area under high yielding varieties (HYVs) to cereals cropped area has risen from 15 in 1970–1 to 75 in the late 1990s.” (Dev, 2012: 15)

However, Ramakrishna et al (2010) note that “the implementation of land reforms in Andhra Pradesh has been a major failure. While early reforms did succeed in weakening the old intermediaries, erstwhile landlords have continued to hold on to large tracts of land under different guises. Land reform has not provided security of tenure for tenants in the state. Estimates by various studies show that about 30 per cent of the total cultivated land is under informal or concealed tenancy. Rents continue to be very high under tenancy contracts. Confiscation and redistribution of ceiling surplus land has been slow.” (Ramachandran et al, 2005: 4)

One of the consequences of the highly rigid tenancy reforms brought in by the state has been to drive the entire array of tenancy arrangements into the informal and oral sphere. The Land Revenue Act of 1999 stipulated that names and identity of tenants must be placed in official records, but there are hardly any records of tenancy available even with government departments and agencies. Micro-studies have shown tenancy to be high in

almost all parts of the state and rents to be disproportionately higher. Tenants are hard pressed and find themselves unfavourably disposed as their tenures are arbitrary as a result of which there is no outstanding incentive to invest in agriculture. As they do not have any documents that bind legally to the land, they also do not receive the government funds marked out for agricultural development as it goes into the accounts of *pattedars*. All this has a pronounced effect on productivity levels, which in the case of almost all small tenants, remains low.

Another class of farmers take tenancies. These are the bigger farmers who want to increase their area of operation beyond the land they own. Such farmers take lease from marginal and small farmers who mostly leave part or sometimes whole of their land fallow as they cannot raise even the capital costs through selling their limited produce. Thus, big farmers are in many cases big tenants in the sense that they may take tenancy of lands scattered over a geographical area.

Telangana was a region dominated by dry land farming where the principle source of water was tanks and wells to a lesser extent. The opening of the Nizamsagar dam in the late 1930s brought canal irrigation to a wide area for the first time in the state.

Since the 1950s, both irrigation facilities and the area with canal coverage has increased steadily, with rapid growth occurring till the 1980s. In the 1950s, a net area of only 25% was under canal coverage, which grew to 40% in 2000-1. However, D N Reddy (2007) notes that in spite of the growth in canal irrigation facilities, “the overall increase is much below the estimated potential of about 60 per cent [and] that may be an indication of underachievement.” (Reddy, 2006: 142)

Table: 2.2 NET AREA IRRIGATED FROM DIFFERENT SOURES OF IRRIGATION AND GROSS AREA IRRIGATED FROM 1955-56 TO 2004-05

(Area in '000' Hect.)

S. No	Year	Tanks	Project Canals	Tube Wells	Other Wells	Other Sources	Net area irrigated	Gross area irrigated
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	1956-57	1180	1274	0	321	85	2860	3388
2	1960-61	1151	1331	0	328	99	2909	3472
3	1965-66	1189	1226	31	424	108	1978	3533
4	1970-01	1112	1579	66	444	113	3314	4223
5	1975-76	1100	1626	114	470	126	3436	4528
6	1980-81	900	1693	147	629	93	3462	4342
7	1985-86	786	1783	184	673	113	3539	4337
8	1990-91	968	1869	282	1021	166	4306	5370
9	1995-96	747	1539	710	947	181	4124	5304
10	2000-01	727	1649	1066	888	197	4527	5916
11	2004-05	477	1346	124	649	155	3881	4987

Source: Director of Economics and Statistics, Hyderabad GOLDEN JUBILEE OF ANDHRA

The actual area of canal irrigation has declined since 1990s, and indicates that the high irrigation potential due to availability of canal water is underutilised and not well managed. Silting and degradation of catchment areas have been the other major problems. Tanks have also declined since the 1950s since canals were prioritised and no measures were to taken to protect and rejuvenate tanks. Wells and bore-wells have been extensively used and severe depletion of ground water is one of the consequences of this. In dry areas, according to D N Reddy, this “spells an ecological doom.” (ibid)

Table 2.3PERCENTAGE SHARE IN NET AREA IRRIGATED

S. No	Year	Tanks	Project Canals	Tube Wells	Other Wells	Other Sources
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	1956-57	41.24	44.55	0.00	11.23	2.98
2	1960-61	39.57	45.76	0.00	11.27	3.40
3	1965-66	39.93	41.16	1.04	14.23	3.62
4	1970-01	33.55	47.65	1.99	13.40	3.41
5	1975-76	32.01	47.33	3.32	13.68	3.67
6	1980-81	25.99	48.90	4.26	18.18	2.69
7	1985-86	22.22	50.37	5.19	19.01	3.19
8	1990-91	22.48	43.40	6.55	23.72	3.84
9	1995-96	18.10	37.31	17.21	22.97	4.39
10	2000-01	16.05	36.43	23.56	19.61	4.36
11	2004-05	12.29	34.68	32.31	16.72	3.99

Source: Director of Economics and Statistics, Hyderabad

As a result of the extreme dependence on groundwater, there is a severe burden on farmers – in most cases marginal, small and semi-medium – to find their own resources to make agriculture viable. It has been noticed that there is a big element of waste involved in the process of digging wells. There is always the chance of not finding water, and therefore squandering the investment undertaken to make the ground cultivable. In contrast to the region of Telangana, farmers in coastal Andhra benefit from substantial public investments in providing dependable irrigation facilities.

The increasing costs of inputs and the declining farm size have not provided sufficiently for the social reproduction of labour. Since small farms do not provide sufficient incomes even for the reproduction of the household, marginal and small cultivators do not have the capacity to hire labourers. To tackle the crisis arising out of lower returns from agriculture as well as the freeing up of unabsorbed labour, the government introduced Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005 to provide subsistence. To support input costs, the state government provides free electricity for

bore-well pump sets. To support dependent members of rural households, the government provides old age pensions, widow pensions, schools with hostels for backward communities and housing for weaker sections. The Public Distribution System (PDS) provides basic food items at subsidised prices. Anganwadi schools or rural crèches have been introduced to take care of children of working parents. Pensions have also been introduced for toddy tappers, weavers and beedi workers.

As discussed in this chapter, failures of land and tenancy reforms, along with irrigation and other agricultural infrastructural frailties combined with neoliberal policies has led to increasing input cost for small and marginal land holders, causing acute agrarian distress in the region, displacing many in the farming sector to shift diversify the occupations. Tracing the broader politico-agrarian contours of the region helps to understand the field site of Kotha Armur village, which has been influenced by these wider land and labor practices and capital flows in and out of the region. I now turn to Kotha Armur, a microcosm of contemporary rural transformations.

Chapter 3

Kotha Armur: Village Profile

Kotha Armur is a revenue village and is part of the Perkit gram panchayat.⁷ The village is about 180 km. from Hyderabad, the administrative capital of the state of Telangana. This village has been surveyed multiple times, and has been uniquely tracked over the past century. It was first surveyed in 1929-30 when it was part of Hyderabad State (Iyengar, 1931), again in 1949-50 soon after the integration of Hyderabad State in the Indian Union post- independence (Iyengar, 1951), in 1961 when it was part of Andhra Pradesh⁸ state when it was surveyed by the Census of India, and again in 1998 when it was surveyed as part of studies carried out for an edition on Rural Transformations (Reddy, 2008).

Over the years, the expanding network of roads and highways has drastically changed the connectivity of the village and concomitantly its socioeconomic characteristics. It is closely located at the intersection of two National Highways (NH): the road between Nizamabad and Jagdalpur (NH 63), and that between Hyderabad and Nagpur (NH 44). NH 44 used to pass right by the village, but in 2014 a new by-pass opened that took the road a few kilometers away from the village. Currently, it is difficult to strictly demarcate boundaries of Armur town, Kotha Armur and Perkit. Previously, these used to be separated by the highway, which used to crisscross on the east side of the village settlement, but now both highways crisscross two kilometers away to the west of Kotha Armur. In addition, a new railway line is now functioning between Karimnagar and Nizamabad, and there is a railway station called Armur, which is in close proximity to the

⁷ There are two kinds of administrative units. The first is revenue and the other is political. Here, the village has been defined in terms of the revenue administrative outlines.

⁸ Andhra Pradesh was a state from 1956 to 2014

village. The roads have been always expanding in width and volume of use. Till NH 44 was still a straight road, Armur town was growing towards it. The new bypassing stretch of the highway moved the main tri-junction 2 kilometers to the west and settlements have been increasing towards that direction. The new railway station of Armur is close to this new tri-junction. To reach Kotha Armur by bus, one has to get off at Perkit bus stand though this too is within the unit of Kotha Armur. In effect, the name of Kotha Armur is absent though both train and bus stations are within the boundaries of the village. The railway station is within the revenue unit of Kotha Armur but it has the name of Armur, and this is indicative of the expansion of the town towards that direction.

The 1961 census monograph on Kotha Armur stated "the economic life of this village is simple" (Census Monograph, 1961:45) and "not being a commercial center, this village has no big commercial establishments." (ibid: 65). However, the village has undergone rapid changes due to the extension of agricultural and irrigation facilities, demographic changes, growing networks of connectivity, and migration to Bombay and, more recently, Dubai.

The land market in the region is highly active due to the unique expansionary tendency of nearby Armur town. The presence of agriculturally prosperous villages in the region around Armur town has made this a lucrative place to invest in land. Land in bulk is primarily bought by speculators and real estate agents, and in addition, smaller bits are bought by rich agriculturists and migrants to Dubai with their savings. Many land-owning farmer households were planning to buy agricultural land in nearby villages after selling the land they held in this village.⁹

⁹ During field work it was common for me to hear about someone buying land in other villages.

The social composition of the village is diverse; there are 17 caste groups in total. These are namely: *Chakali, Dhora, Goundla, GuratiKapu, Reddy, Goshka, Vishwa Brahmin, Kummari, Devanga, Madiga, Mala, Mangali, Mashitla, Mera, MunnuruKapu, Padmashali, Poosala, Satani*, .While occupations are not strictly related to caste at present, occupational mobility has a close relationship to caste, Reddys, the traditionally dominant caste group in the village, have largely migrated to the cities, and thus members from many households of this caste group are not as active in agriculture and from those who are active are not solely dependent on agriculture.

The economy of Kotha Armur thrives mainly on agriculture, beedi industry, toddy-tapping and remittances from migrants to West Asia, especially Dubai.¹⁰ There are also a variety of non-farm activities being practiced in the village. Households most active in agriculture come from Gurati Kapus, Mala and Madiga communities. Importantly, the village heavily depends on migrant agricultural labourers. Presently, there are two attached labourers employed in the village both attached labourers come from Siddipet region of Medak district. Petty trade dominates the physical character of the village and there are shops trading in retail all along the roads. Currently, Beedi industry is the largest employer in the village. Except for members of Reddy and Gurati households, women from all other caste groups engage in beedi rolling.

Landlessness and mobility dynamics of the Devanga caste community have significantly shaped the village dynamics. Accounting for about one-third of the total households in the village, Devanga, also known as Koshti caste group, traditionally worked in weaving

¹⁰ 'Dubai' is the term used by villagers or their relatives to connote going abroad for work. It does not strictly mean that the person concerned has gone to Dubai itself. It could mean that the migrant could have gone anywhere in the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Kuwait and Oman. This term has been reproduced in the study because of its linguistic use by villagers.

occupation. The 1929 survey reported large numbers of families doing weaving work and working in handlooms. The main articles produced by the weavers were ordinary cotton sarees and everyday *Kans* worn by the *ryot* classes. While Armur town was a major center for weaving and trading in cloth for a long time, the town no longer has a weaving or handloom industry. This has forced Devangas to look for work outside their traditional caste occupation, and most of them are involved in wage work. After the introduction of mill cloth, the caste occupation of weaving completely dwindled and thus no one in the village is involved in weaving anymore. The search of wage work has taken many to Bombay to work in power-looms.

The 1929 survey found out that only one landholding family was into weaving and no weaving family (except one) occupied agricultural land either as owner or tenant. This pattern continues to date, as no Devanga household owns agricultural land, and as a result, Devangas have remained landless since 1929, except for a period between 1961 and 2011 when they owned some land. By the 1980s, they started migrating to Dubai with the incidence of Devanga migration to Dubai at its highest from the 1990s through 2000s.

According 2011 Census, there were 818 households in the village, and the population was 3229. Out of this, the Scheduled Caste population was 368 (11.39%).The caste groups majorly engaged in agriculture are Gurati Kapus, Mala and Madiga, and of these groups ,Gurati Kapus currently dominate the agricultural sector. A large majority of agricultural labourers come from outside the village to work as wage labourers.

According to 2011 census, the total main workers were 49.05%, out of which 50.75% were male and 49.24% were female. Out of these, cultivators numbered 147(9.28%), out

of the 147 cultivators 62.58% were male and 37.41% female. The number of agricultural labourers was 151 of which 52.31% were male and 47.68% were female. In total, 727 were recorded as 'other workers', of which 80.33% were male and 19.66% were female. The total number of people engaged in household industries was 559, of which male were 8.76% and 91.23% were female. 119 were recorded as 'marginal workers', of which 44.53% were male and 55.46% were female (Census of India, 2011).

Land

As of 2010, there are 379 landholdings in Kotha Armur.¹¹ The average size of landholdings is 1.75 acres. The following table illustrates landholdings and their distribution.

Table 3.1: Landholdings and Size Wise distribution (2010)

SI. No.	Size of the Holdings*	SCs						Other Caste Groups					
		No. of Holdings			Acres			No. of Holdings			Acres		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1	Marginal	34	12	46	68.33	7.76	76.09	159	89	248	143.35	82.31	225.66
2	Small	8	3	11	23.99	11.09	35.08	42	16	58	144.91	54.18	199.09
3	Semi-medium	-	-	-	-	-	-	11	2	13	78.50	10.57	89.07
4	Medium	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	3	39.89	-	39.89
5	Large	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
6	Total	42	15	57	93.32	18.85	111.17	215	107	322	406.65	147.06	553.71

***Marginal is below 2.5 acres, Small is between 2.5 acres-5 acres, Semi-medium is between 5-10 acres, Medium is between 10-15 acres, and Large land holding is above 15 acres.**

Source: Village Revenue Office, Kotha Armur, 2010.

¹¹ VRO office 2010, Kotha Armur

Land holding

Out of the total 379 landholdings, among SCs, there are 57 landowners, out of which 46 are marginal and 11 are small farmers. There are no medium or large farmers amongst the SCs. In OBCs and other castes, the total number of landowners are 322(84.96%). Marginal farmers number 248(77.01%), small farmers 58(18.01%), semi-medium farmers number 13(4.03%), medium farmers number 3(0.93%). There are no large farmers in this category as well. There are 122(32.18%) women farmers in all including SCs and other castes, out of which marginal farmers are 101(82.78%), small 19(15.57%) and 2(1.63%) semi-medium. No women farmers hold medium or large farms. Among male farmers, 193(75.09%) are marginal, small 50(19.45%), semi-medium 11(4.28%), medium 3(1.16%), and no large farmers. Disaggregating based on caste categories, among women, 107(87.70%) out of the 122(32.18%) women farmers are from OBC and OC categories and SCs constitute only 15(12.29%) of the total women farmers.

The size of the average holding for all landholdings is 1.75 acres. The size of the average holding for SC households is 1.95 acres. For SC males the average is 2.05 acres, and for women it is 1.25 acres. For OBCs and other castes, the size of the average holding is 1.71 acres, out of which men hold 1.89 acres, and women hold 1.37 acres. The average is higher for SCs than other caste groups because the number of marginal landholders is very high for this village but the number of SC landowners is rather low.

The total area under cultivation was 664 acres and 88 cents. The total area held by landowners from Scheduled Castes amounts to 111 acres and 17 cents. Total area held by all other caste groups is 553 acres and 71 cents (see table above).

Land ownership

Since 1929, the landowning structure in the village has undergone a considerable change. The 1929 survey shows that there were 64 inhabited households in Kotha Armur. 32 households were landowners implying 50% were landowners and equal proportion was landless. The land was divided into 174 bits which was divided into three types: dry, wet and garden land. It was recorded by Iyengar (1931) that there was a total of 718 acres and 10 guntas of dry land, and only 77 acres of wet land. The size of average dry land was recorded as 29 acres and 37 guntas approximately. For wet land, it was 3 acres and 26 guntas approximately. For garden land, it was 1 acre and 14 guntas approximately. Out of the 32 landholding households, 24 had dry land and 21 owned wet land.¹² The biggest dry land holding was 216 acres and 29 guntas, and the smallest holding was 2 guntas. In the case of wet land, the biggest holding was 13 acres and 37 guntas, and the smallest was 10 guntas. 11 acres and 19 guntas were classified for double-cropping, but at the time of the survey, all the double-cropping wet land was uncultivated due to shortage of rain. The rest of wet land was used seasonally for *abi*¹³ and *thabi*¹⁴ crops. Since the single-cropping land was assessed only once, they were left unused in the off-season even though water and other facilities were available¹⁵.

¹² 3 households did not hold any wet land.

¹³ Abhi is Kharif

¹⁴ Thabi is Rabi

¹⁵ There was more revenue collected if the land is assessed for double crop.

Out of the 32 landholders, 27 were cultivators. Among the 5 non-cultivating landholders, there were 2 village officers, 1 deshmukh, 1 trader and 1 coolie. Out of the 24 cultivators, 9 had other occupations: 6 held the post of village officers, and there was one weaver, trader and a barber.

The number of occupancy holdings grew from 32 in 1929 to 60 in 1949. The number of bits into which the total agricultural land was divided into had increased from 174 in 1929 to 298 in 1949. While there was only 1 non-cultivating landholder in 1929, in 1949 this number increased to 10. Which means that out of 60 occupants, the number of cultivators were 50. The number of cultivating occupants having subsidiary occupations had increased from 9 in 1929 to 45 in 1949. Out of these 45, 40 took up subsidiary work as agricultural labourers and 5 became part-time weavers. There was also a change in the ownership of land among weavers in Kotha Armur. In 1929, not a single weaving family owned agricultural land, but in 1949, 38 out of 41 weavers owned small bits of land and pursued agriculture as a subsidiary occupation.

In 1961, the total *patta* land of Kotha Armur was 807 acres and 23 guntas. There were 192 landholding households. Out of these, 106 households were from Kotha Armur, and of the 86 households who owned land were from neighbouring villages. In 1961, 381 acres and 24 guntas was under wet cultivation, and 174 acres and 29 guntas was under dry cultivation. The rest of the land, that is, 626 acres and 7 guntas was fallow.

The new irrigation facilities opened up by the Nizamsagar canal converted a considerable extent of dry land into wet land. There was continuous increase in the area brought under cultivation in general. In 1961, there were only 34 occupants out of 192 total landholders who did not possess any wet land. The biggest dry landholding was 85 acres and 13

guntas, and the smallest was 3 guntas. The biggest wet landholding was 31 acres and 14 guntas, and the smallest was 11 guntas. Out of the total 192 holdings, 118 possessed dry land, with an average of 4 acres and 15 guntas. 157 occupants possessed wet land with an average of 2 acres and 17 guntas.

In 1961, 70% landholding households had less than 3 acres of land. Only one landholding household had more than 100 acres. 92.7% of all the households owned less than 8 acres. 33 households had acquired landed property and 28 families had constructed houses. The village was not an important business centre in 1961 and its contact with other places remained indistinct and irregular for this reason.

In 1961, 100 sample households were surveyed in this village.¹⁶ 56 households owned land, and households belonging to Vaishya, Muslim, Mathistla, Mera, Sathani, Mangali and Dhor groups did not possess any land: "Almost all the 56 households owning land were either cultivating the land themselves or getting it cultivated by hired labour except 2 households of Koshti caste, one household each of Kummari, Madiga and Chakali (washerman) who had leased out their lands. This reveals that the person whose traditional occupation is other than agriculture have tendency merely to acquire and lease out the land." (Iyengar, 1931: 34)

¹⁶ The whole was not surveyed.

**Table 3.2: Size and Caste-wise Distribution of Landholding in Kotha Armur, 1961
Sample Survey**

Size of Holding	No. of Holdings	Area (acres)	Average Size (acres)
I. Size Class			
Marginal	28 (47.5)	35.00 (11.5)	1.25
Small	20 (33.9)	28.0 (9.3)	1.4
Semi-medium	3 (5.1)	21.0 (7.0)	7.0
Medium	3 (5.1)	28.0 (9.3)	9.3
Large	5 (8.4)	190.0 (62.9)	38.0
All	59 (100)	302 (100)	5.12
II. Caste-Groups			
Other Castes	10 (16.1)	214.0 (70.9)	21.4
Backward Castes	36 (61.1)	67.0 (22.1)	1.86
Scheduled Castes	13 (22.0)	21.0 (7.0)	1.62
All	59 (100)	302 (100)	5.12

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentages.

(These details are about 59 Landholding Households among the 100 sampled Households).Source: 1961 Census Monograph, Kotha Armur.

Out of the 59 households owning land, 40 households (67.79%) had holdings below 3 acres. There were only 2 households which had land above 12 acres. One of these 2 households had land in the range of 15-17 acres. The other household owned land in the range of 51-75 acres. Both of these were Reddy households.

By 1961, land reforms were introduced in Andhra Pradesh, and only one well-to-do Reddy person knew about the abolition of *jagirs*. This was generally unknown in the village at the time of the survey (Census Monograph, 1961). Of the 100 surveyed households, 14 persons knew about tenancy legislation: "One Goundla (toddy-tapper) had lost their land under this legislation. Seven households reported to having a knowledge of Land Ceiling Act. No other land legislations were known to the villagers. There were

nine households who benefited from the Land Assignment schemes, out of which two households belonged to Vaddara community."(ibid: 36)

The extension of the irrigation canal from Nizamsagar dam opened the way for expansion of wet land cultivation, and this has been seen as constitutive of Kotha Armur's agricultural expansion. There was no change in the net geographical area of land available for use from 1961 to 2001. Barren and uncultivable land was measured at about 49 and a half acres but grew to 197 acres in 1971. This stayed more or less uniform until 1991, with a sudden decrease to 91 acres in 2001. This has been explained by the surge in availability of groundwater from the first part of the 1990s onwards (Reddy D N, 2008).

Table 3.3: Land Use Pattern in Kotha Armur 1961-2001 (in Acres)

Sl. No.	Type of Use	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2010
1.	Geographical Area	1182.2	1182.2	1182.2	1182.2	1182.2	1182.2
2.	Forest	-	-	-	-	-	-
3.	Barren and uncultivable land	49.04 (4.1)	197.0 (16.7)	199.9 (17.0)	210.9 (17.8)	91.25 (7.7)	*
4.	Land put to nonagricultural uses	323 (27.3)	372 (31.5)	265.5 (22.5)	209.9 (17.8)	210.18 (17.8)	369.36
5.	Permanent pastures and other grazing lands	135.67 (11.5)	129.7 (11.0)	101.0 (8.5)	130.7 (11.1)	120.12 (10.2)	150.76
6.	Cultivable waste	14.19 (1.2)	9.7 (0.8)	14.8 (1.3)	11.2 (1.0)	10.30 (0.9)	*
7.	Current Fallow	185.24 (15.7)	43.8 (3.7)	-	61.3 (5.2)	103.20 (8.7)	*
8.	Net Sown Area	475.1 (40.2)	430 (36.4)	601 (50.8)	558 (47.2)	646 (54.6)	664.88

Source: 1. 1961-1991: Census of India, Nizamabad District Census Handbooks for the respective Census.2. 2001: VAO, Kotha Armur.

* Information not available

The net sown area increased progressively from 475 acres in 1961 to 646 acres in 2001 and to 664.88 in 2010, barring a fall by about 5 acres between 1981 and 1991. In 2001, 54.6% of village land was being used for active cultivation. The obverse of this is the steady reduction of non-agricultural use of land that dropped from 323 acres in 1961 to 211 acres in 2001. In 2010, land put to non-agricultural use grew to 369.36 acres. The new stretch of the highway is one of the main reasons for this increase. An interesting statistic is the sudden increase of cultivable land left fallow. In 1961 fallow land had stood at 185 acres but this had been reduced to only 43 acres in 1971. But the figure for 2001 was 103 acres, or 8.7% of the village land.

The 2008 study by Narasimha Reddy sought to clarify two problems bearing on an analysis of changes in landholding structures in Kotha Armur.

Table 3.4: Landholding Pattern in Kotha Armur, 1977-84 and 1998-99

Size of Holding	No. of Holdings		Area (acres)		Average Size (acres)	
	1977-84	1998-99	1977-84	1998-99	1977-84	1998-99
Marginal	174 (66.7)	278 (76.6)	223.57 (27.4)	217.37 (24.2)	1.3	0.78
Small	49 (18.8)	49 (13.5)	169.13 (20.7)	169.85 (18.9)	3.5	3.47
Semi-medium	16 (6.1)	15 (4.1)	104.69 (12.8)	88.56 (9.9)	6.5	5.9
Medium	9 (3.4)	8 (2.2)	77.77 (9.5)	70.15 (7.8)	8.6	8.77
Large	13 (5.0)	13 (3.6)	241.9 (29.6)	351.69 (39.2)	18.6	27.1
Total	261 (100)	363 (100)	817.1 (100)	897.62 (100)	3.13	2.5

Source: Compiled by D Narasimha Reddy (2008)

In 1998-99, the number of landholdings were 363, out of which 278 were marginal, that is 76% of all landholdings were marginal farms. The number of marginal farms in 1961 were 134, accounting for 36.9% of the land. In 1984, the corresponding number was 174 out of 261, at 66.7%. Thus, one can see a steep rise of marginal farms in terms of absolute numbers although the percentage of land under marginal farms remained more or less uniform in the mid-twenties between 1984 and 1999. However, net area under marginal holdings increased substantially between 1961 when it was around 11% and 1984 when it was around 24%. An even more revealing aspect of the growth in marginal farms is the change in the average size of the marginal farm. In 1961, it was 1.25 acres and in 1984 it was 1.3 acres. But in 1999, the average size was only 0.78 acres. (See table above).

In comparison to this, the size of the average small farm had grown from 1.4 acres in 1961 to 3.47 acres in 1999. The share of large holdings increased from 242 acres in 1984 to 352 acres in 1999. At 39.2% in 1999, the proportion of large landholdings increased from 29.6% in 1984.

Table 3.5 Size-wise Distribution of Landholdings, 1962-2010

Size of Holding (in acres)	Number of Holdings during*				2010
	1961	1974-75	1987-88	1998-99	
Below 3.0	134	137	165	205	294
3-5	26	33	35	39	72
6-8	18	12	12	4	9
9-11	2	4	4	2	2
12-14	5	3	3	-	2
15-17	1	1	1	-	2
18-20	2	1	1	-	-
21-30	-	1	1	-	-
31-40	1	-	-	-	-
41-50	-	-	-	-	-
51-75	1	1	1	-	-
76-99	1	1	1	-	-
100 and above	1	1	1	-	-
Total	192	195	225	250	379

Note: *These do not include 'non-pattadar' holdings.

Source: Compiled by D. Narasimha Reddy and sourced from, VRO, Kotha Armur 2010

The 1961 monograph says there were 192 landholdings. There was only 1 landholding above 100 acres in size. In 1998-99, the biggest holding was only between 9 and 11 acres. In 2011, the biggest holding was between 15 and 17 acres. The number of holdings below 3 acres were 134 in 1962, 137 in 1975, 165 in 1988, 205 in 1999 and 294 in 2011. This indicates drastic reduction of landholdings over five decades. The category of large landowners or landlords disappeared. A small proportion of medium farmers owning a maximum of 17 acres stay in the village.

In 1962, there was only 1 holding above 100 acres, 1 between 76 and 99 acres, and 1 between 51 and 75 acres. There were 26 holdings (13.54% of total agricultural land) between 3 and 5 acres, 18 holdings (9.37%) between 6 and 8, 2 holdings between 9 and 11, 5 holdings between 12 and 14, 2 holdings between 18 and 20, and 1 holding each in the ranges between 15 and 17, and 31 and 40 acres. There were in total 192 holdings in 1962.

In the year 1975, 137 holdings (70.25%) were below 3 acres of land, 33 holdings (16.92%) were between 3 and 5, 12 holdings (6.15%) were between 6 and 8 acres, 4 holdings were between 9 and 11 acres, 3 holdings were 12 and 14 acres, 1 holding each in the range between 15 and 17 acres, 18 and 20 acres, 21 and 30 acres, 51 and 75 acres, 76 and 99 acres, and 100 acres and above. There were in total 195 holdings in 1975.

In the year 1988, there were 165 holdings (73.33%) below 3 acres, 35 holdings between 3 and 5 acres, 12 holdings (5.33%) between 6 and 8, 4 holdings between 12 and 14 acres, 4 holdings between 9 and 11, 3 holdings between 12 and 14. 1 holding each between 15 and 17, 18 and 20, 21 and 30, 51 and 75, 76 and 99 and 100 and above. There were in total 225 holdings.

In the year 1999, there were in total 250 holdings. 82% of the holdings were below 3 acres, 15 % were between 3 and 5 acres, 4 holdings (1.6%) were between 6 and 8, 2 holdings between 9 and 11. There were no holdings above 11 acres. The highest holding was in between 9 and 11 acres unlike the previous years, where some of the holdings were large.

Credit/debt:

Almost all farmers in the village borrowed from the banks. Now, credit is readily available in the village. The old forms of credit-debt relations have been replaced, and farmers no longer go to a '*sahukar*' to meet their credit requirements in agriculture. Many villagers are into lending money. Self-help groups (SHGs) are active in the village today. Through these, women have access to credit. In 1929-30, Kotha Armur was recorded as having no mortgage debt and its total indebtedness was quite low compared to other villages and regions within Hyderabad State.

Out of the 64 inhabiting families, 49 mentioned having debts. The total debt adding up all the 49 families came to Rs.2465. The average debt per family was measured at around Rs.50. The interest chargeable was generally between Rs.1 and Rs.1.4 paisa. No commission was allowed to merchants till sale of harvest. The study noted that the average debt per indebted family was particularly low for Kotha Armur.

In 1961, no households in the village had moneylending as their primary occupation. Out of the 100 households surveyed, only two families – one from the Goundla caste lent Rs.600 and the other from the Mutharsi caste lent Rs.480 – had lent out money to others (though it is not mentioned *to whom* this money was lent). The villagers took loan from "*shahukars* of Perkit, Armur and even Nizamabad."(Census Monograph, 1961:41).It was a fairly common practice to borrow from relatives at nominal or no interest. This is similar to the practice of reciprocal labour, where also no or very little money is exchanged. However, this was insufficient to meet the credit requirements of the village at large. Larger, more substantial loans were obtained from private moneylenders, the

Agricultural Credit Co-operative Society, the Revenue and Planning Departments of the state government and the Land Mortgage Bank at Nizamabad. (ibid)

A look at indebtedness figures from 1929-30 and 1961-62 shows that though the percentage of indebted families out of those surveyed were similar – at 76.56% in 1929-30 and 77% in 1961-62, the total amount of indebtedness was not within comparable range. While it was only Rs.2465 in 1929-30, it was Rs.1, 09, 136 in 1961-62. This is highly indicative of monetization and the real growth in terms of circulation of money. The reclamation of fallow land and the increase of area under wet cultivation with the accompanying increase in general profitability is relatable to this. The rate of interest charged by private moneylenders in 1961-62 was 4%-25%. The interest rate charged by the Cooperative Society was 6 ½ % and it had lent out a total of Rs.23, 956.36 nP¹⁷ from the time it started in 1960.

"Most of the households met their agricultural expenses from their own sources. A few people borrow from well to do agriculturalists or from the village *sahukar* (moneylender)." (ibid: 39). Of the 100 households surveyed, 45 households had taken loans in 1961. Some loans were interest free and "one household is reported to have taken a loan of Rs.200 at 120% interest." (ibid: 42).

The Agricultural Credit Cooperative Society started functioning from 30th March, 1960, covering farmers in both Kotha Armur and Perkit. This cooperative society had members only from land owing households. Most of the members of the society had taken loans. There was another cooperative institution called Grain Bank. The main objective of this institution was to supply paddy seeds to the farmers.

¹⁷ It is a unit of currency in 1929 indication 1/100th of Indian Rupee.

Tenancy

In 2011, tenancy was widespread but since there was no official record of tenancy, it was difficult to collect data on tenancy. However, one can see from the reduction in the numbers of cultivators in 2011 and the increase in the number of landholdings that even though tenancy was not recorded, it was quite high. Few cultivators were cultivating large lands and this was possible only through tenancy.

In 1929, none of the landholding cultivators had taken tenancy, and there were 11 landless tenants in total. The size of average tenant farms were 22 acres and 20 guntas for dry land and 1 acre 5 guntas for wet land. The term of tenancy was on the average 3-4 years. In wet lands, the rate of tenancy was half the produce payable to the owner, the tenant retained the total hay produced. In dry lands, the tenant paid in between 8 as. and Rs.1 more than the government assessment per acre. In several other cases the tenant paid the owner exactly the government assessment. There was not a single case of dispossession, though the report noted that the probable reason for this must have been the large extent of land retained by some, especially the village officers, without expecting an immediate profit, and borne out of the intention of government officers to hold land through puppet tenants. This way, the possibilities of landless tenants or labourers getting land from government was rendered non-existent. 5 tenants had additional occupations.

In the 1950s, in three separate dispossession cases, the court declared three tenants as 'protected tenants'(Reddy D N, 2008). In 1961, two households of Devanga, one household each of Kummari, Madiga and Chakali had leased out their lands. In 1970, a big landlord had donated 20 acres as part of the Bhoodan movement. Farmers

acknowledged that due to the Naxalite movement, nobody wanted to be a large landholder (ibid).

Land prices went up substantially after 1961, the overall appreciation in land price was between 112% and 145% in the 37 years from 1961 and 1998. In 2001, the price of an acre of wet land stood at Rs.1,40,000 and of dry land at Rs.1,20,000(Census Monograph, 1961)

Reddy(2008: 81) in his 2008 study explained: "there is hardly any visible tenancy in the village, though some land owing households seems to have covertly leased out their property, primarily due to the present migration of male members for gainful employment in cities." Wherever tenancy existed, share-cropping was noticed, with labour and water invested by the tenant and manure brought from investment by landowner. Crops were shared equally. In any case, due to high value of crops, self-cultivation was preferred over tenancy.

Irrigation

The wet cultivation in Kotha Armur is mainly through bore well irrigation. The other source of wet irrigation is tank irrigation. In 1929, there were 15 wells and 3 tanks which catered to the needs of irrigation in Kotha Armur. Out of these 15 wells, 10 were government wells and wet cultivation was done with water from these wells and tanks. Until 1937-38, rainwater stored in tanks was the main source of irrigation. Groundwater was tapped by digging wells. As the Nizamsagar canal started providing irrigation facilities in 1937-38, the land under canal irrigation increased from 18 acres in 1951 to 294 acres in 1961.

Table 3.6: Source-wise Gross Area Irrigated in Armur (in acres)

Year	Tanks	Wells/Bore wells	Canals	Gross Irrigated Area	Gross Sown Area	Source of Gross Irrigated Area
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
1951	71	(32.6)	18 (8.3)	128 (5837)	218 (100)	412 52.9
1955	71 (24.7)	11 (3.8)	204 (71.1)	287 (100)	487	58.9
1961	80 (19.7)	32 (7.9)	294 (72.4)	406 (100)	438	92.7
1988	91 (20.7)	65 (14.8)	284 (64.5)	440 (100)	720	61.1
2001	87 (8.8)	692 (69.7)	215 (21.7)	993 (100)	1286	77.2

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentages.

Sources: Compiled by D Narasimha Reddy (2008).

There was continuous increase in the acreage of land under canal irrigation and a steep fall in acreage under well irrigation in Kotha Armur. The land under tank irrigation has been constant over the years. In 1950, land irrigated by wells measured at 18 acres and 9 guntas and rose to 29 acres and 13 guntas in 1954. Access to canal irrigation also increased in the corresponding period from 218 acres a 3 guntas to 294 acres and 16 guntas. The following two years, 1955 and 1956, saw drastic reduction in the use of wells. Canal irrigation and tank irrigation grew steadily without any corresponding upward leap that could be relatable to the fall in the use of wells. Following this fall, use of wells increased again in the years 1957 and 1958 (Census Monograph, 1961), but their use fell sharply in 1959 to coverage at 6 acres and remained at that figure till 1961. On

the other hand, area coming under canal irrigation continued to increase and stood at 381 acres and 24 guntas in 1961.

This increase in land with access to canal water was reflected in the “increasing prosperity... [resulting from] the continuous increase of the area under wet cultivation from year to year.”(ibid: 32)

As Kotha Armur falls at the tail-end of the canal, water supply from the canal became more unreliable in the 1980s. This was caused by poor maintenance of the canal (Reddy D N, 2008). In 1988, area covered under canal irrigation measured 284 acres. Between 1988 and 2001, the significant development in irrigation was the ten-fold increase in the number of bore-wells. In 2001 area covered under bore-wells was 692 acres. Wells had been in use earlier in the village, but their number and utility has decreased since 1961. This was the period in which electrical machinery started to be used regularly for agricultural purposes. The digging of bore-wells was done entirely with electrical machinery. Though the canal had been drying up for a number of years past, groundwater levels had increased in the area because to it.

Electrical power connections for agricultural purposes numbered 120 in 1988 and in 2002 this grew to 601. The total area under irrigation in 2001 was 993 acres, more than double of the 440 acres in 1988. This was possible largely due to bore-wells. In 2004, power subsidies was introduced in the state of Andhra Pradesh because of the importance of power in agriculture. Farmers invested heavily both on bore-wells, motorized pumps and on electricity connections. When cultivation was done under tank irrigation or it was rain-fed, farmers took loans to meet investments required in agriculture and also household needs. After the introduction of bore-wells, farmers took loans from private

moneylenders to dig bore-wells though there was always the uncertainty of not finding water and ending up with huge debt.

With every improvement in irrigation facilities, farmers' excitement for new ways of irrigation met new uncertainties. The canal irrigation that came into the village resulted in developing the land for wet cultivation for which farmers had to incur huge investments to convert dry land to wet land but the uncertainty of consistent availability of water year after year remained (Census Monograph, 1961). Due to the availability of canal water, “the holders of dry land in the past might have sold away a portion of their land as wet cultivation needs more capital investment and labour when compared to dry cultivation.”(ibid: 32)

In the five years preceding 1961, only 2 Reddy landowners and 1 Kapu landowner converted dry land into wet land as they were in a suitable financial situation to invest and develop the land.(ibid: 35). Though the acreage under bore-wells counted up to 692 acres, this does not give the amount of investment done in search of underground water. Failed attempts at finding water are not recorded but the amount of money spent on them is large. This investment on failed bore-wells has never been quantified or accounted for.

Weaving

Historically, the nearest town, Armoor, was noted for its silk sarees and other wares, as already mentioned. Kotha Armoor's primary handloom article was cotton, especially coarse cotton. There was a sizeable weaving community till the 1960s. Traditionally, weaving was the caste profession of Devangas. In 1929, the cost price for 1 saree was approx. 4 rupees 1 paisa 6 annas, including the price of yarn, colouring stuff for the sari

and its distinct edges, and finishing with kans, sweet oil and thin rice paste. Labour was divided to dye, weave, arrange the yarn and prepare the edge.

In Armour town, there were merchants (*sahukars*) who functioned as financiers and salesmen. The money advanced by the merchants enabled the weavers to weave the sarees on an average 5 rupees 12 annas. The difference, that is, the amount available to the weaver, was only 1 rupee 10 paise and 6 annas. Breaking down this amount into 4 working days for the weaver and 1 working day for his wife yielded an average of 6 annas per day for the weaver and 3 annas per day for his wife. On the other hand, the merchants made a profit of at least 1 rupee on each saree. Considering the fact that the weaver had no access to any market and was practically bound to sell his saree to the merchant at the rate fixed by the latter, the capital outlay of the weaver stood at a precarious position and hence, the weaver continued in extreme poverty in spite of the flourishing cotton handloom industry.

In the beginning of the 1960s, hand weaving industry in the region was losing to mill made cloth because the former was unable to compete with the falling price of cotton cloth. This was in spite of the assistance given by the state government of Andhra Pradesh. Loss of traditional occupation being imminent, weaving families were reported to be turning to more effective sources of income. This was the case in Armour, which was known for the quality of its finished silk output, as well as in Kotha Armour where the principle product was coarse cotton cloth, worn mainly by the *ryot* classes on a daily basis.

In the Iyengar's survey (1929), the significant point about the weaver community was that none of the 31 weaving families inhabiting Kotha Armour had any connection with

agriculture. They did not own any land, nor cultivate any as tenants, nor work as agricultural wage labourers. Similarly the agricultural population of Kotha Armur had nothing to do with weaving.

The 1949 Central Board of Economic Inquiries survey showed a transition from the earlier period. Earlier, none of the Devanga caste members were cultivator but this had changed by the late 1940s. Subsidiary occupations had become fairly regular by 1949 and the greater pressure experienced by the weaving community was evident from the fact that out of the 41 weaving families in the village, 38 owned small bits of agricultural land. Some of these families also worked as agricultural labourers. On the other hand, 5 cultivator-owners had taken up weaving on a subsidiary basis.

The situation that emerges from the 1961 census showed greater movement in this direction. The availability of irrigation water may have prompted more and more weaver families to buy land, especially dry land. This coincided with the trend of increasing marginal and small landholdings (Census Monograph, 1961). In the 1940s, shuttle looms were introduced in Kotha Armur and no advancement in tools had taken place since then till the time of the 1961 census survey. Local carpenters manufactured most of the equipment, excepting one or two. The primary manufactured article by 1961 was a very rough quality saree 'of 20 counts' (ibid: 63)

Altogether there were 66 weaver households in Kotha Armur in 1961, out of which 27 were covered by the census survey. Only 8 out of these 27 families followed weaving as the main occupation, and there were 10 looms in these households in total. The rest of the 19 families pursued various occupations, ranging from agriculture, agricultural wage labour and beedi making. The “demand” explanation for the collapse of weaving as a

primary occupation was the availability of cheaper and more attractive mill made cloth. The village population had traditionally depended on local weavers for cloth requirements, but this demand was being met more than amply by the availability of mill cloth. The extent to which mill cloth had pre-empted demand is evident from the observation made by the authors that "the weaving class themselves wear mill made cloth and admit the above fact!" (ibid: 43).

The reduction in demand meant an existential crisis for many weaver families and it was in response to this that many weavers migrated to Bombay to work in textile mills as labourers. In some cases, entire families migrated, while in other cases one or more male members migrated while the women of those families continued to reside in the village.

Whatever vitality remained in the weaving profession was supported by the material and financial encouragement of the Handloom Weavers' Cooperative Society: "The Society supplies the required yarn and other the other raw material to the weaver and pays him Rs.3.25 nP per saree as his wage. The designs are furnished by the Society. The finished product has to be handed over to the Society once in a fort-night when wages are paid. Generally, the material is also supplied once in a fort-night by the Society." (ibid: 63). This shows the extent to which weavers had come to depend on the Cooperative Society that had broken the influence of the moneylender and merchant who had earlier facilitated this exchange. Another victim of the Society's development and primacy was the master weaver who earlier would appropriate a large part of the common weaver's earnings.

The cost of raw materials to weave a saree was calculated at Rs.8.50 nP, with twofull days of labour, and labour cost of Rs.3.44 nP. The total amount spent by the weaver was

Rs.8.50 nP. The sale price of a saree was Rs.12.25 nP, giving the weaver a net receipt margin of Rs.3.75 nP. This was the profit drawn by the weaver *if* the capital invested was his own and there was no loan with interest to be paid back.(Census Monograph, 1961).

Since the risk of market failure or lack of demand would have been too great for the individual weaver to bear, the Cooperative Society subsidized this risk by acting as a middle agent but with no outstanding profit motive of its own. As the census report states: "The advantage of working as a member of the Society is that the weaver is not bothered about the marketing of the produce as well as fluctuations of the market price. The production of 8 sarees requires the whole time work of a man and part time work of a woman for 15 days. Then the average earning of a weaving family with one male worker and one female worker is about Rs.1.73 nP." (Iyengar, 1931: 63) The average earning was Rs.0.56 nP in 1929 and Rs.1.73 nP in 1961.

As a result of this, in 1961 all 8 weaving families out of 27 Devanga households surveyed were members of the Cooperative Society. 1329 sarees were produced in the year 1961-62 and only 9 were kept for domestic use. For the 1320 sarees given to the Cooperative Society, Rs.16, 524 had been paid to the weavers, the average annual pay to each of the 8 families being Rs.3721. Very few sarees were sold outside the Cooperative, though the report mentions their sale to mainly the working class in nearby villages.

Comparing this to the wage received by a textile mill worker in Bombay shows why many weavers had taken the decision to migrate. The monthly pay of a textile mill worker in Bombay was between Rs.100-Rs.140, meaning the daily wage was about Rs.3-Rs.4, whereas the weaver in the village earned daily only Rs.1.50 nP. Both the 1929 and 1949 surveys reported a rather large presence of weavers, though their condition was

generally impoverished. This industry started declining in the 1960s and had become completely defunct by the 1980s.

Handlooms were an extension of the household industry. In 1949, weavers were already facing a crisis and were turning to subsidiary occupations, as shown by the turn to agriculture. Reddy(2008: 70) writes "an interesting feature of weavers in the 1960s was that their dependence on local moneylenders and master weavers had greatly diminished because of the effective functioning of the Handloom Weavers' Cooperative Society in Armour," which provided demand and wages to weavers. But the failure of the cooperative society in the 1970s led to the destruction of this industry and the number of weaving families in 1973 had been reduced to 9. In 2002, there was only a single weaver left in Kotha Armour. Not only weaving, but other caste-based occupations such as fishing, pottery, shoemaking and petty businesses had also become extinct by 2001.

The destruction of household and handlooms industries created an impetus for out-migration of men to other villages or towns to look for better means of income. This trend has also been noticed in other regions in the Telangana state. The drying up of income forced women to look for work too. This fueled the growth of the beedi industry. In the next chapter, the Devangas' search for new forms of livelihood after the destruction of their traditional occupation of weaving will be discussed in detail.

Beedi Industry

The beedi industry in the village was established early in the decade of 1950s. It is an established industry in every district in Telangana, and it is particularly important as a source of employment in Nizamabad district. Since its establishment, it has continued to

employ increasingly larger numbers of people, and presently forms the largest employer in this village. Beedi making is a labour-intensive industry and requires simple implements like scissors and a thread. A beedi factory was existing when the 1949 survey was carried out. In 1961, there were 3 in Kotha Armur and 4 in Perkit. But its expansion in the last two decades of the twentieth century was rapid, as it became the largest non-farm economic activity in Kotha Armur. Almost all women from Devanga caste households engaged in beedi making. Except for Reddys and Gurati Kapus, almost all women from other caste groups in Kotha Armur engage in beedi rolling.

Since its inception, the wage for beedi-making was always paid in piece-rate. This industry in Armur was set up and run by enterprises coming from Maharashtra, especially the Pune region. The factories at the village level are managed by people employed from the village on commission basis. Men from the Devanga caste group are engaged at various levels of production, such as supplying the raw material, taking the finished product to the factory and checking for quality.

The wage rate in 1961 was Rs.1.25 nP for 1000 beedis. Wage was paid once in a week or a fortnight. 38 households with 69 workers were involved in beedi industry out of the 100 households surveyed, of which 59 were female. The raw material for making a beedi consist of beedi leaves and tobacco. Beedi leaves grow naturally in the taluks of Nizamabad district and the forests of Adilabad district. These leaves are purchased by contractors at Forest Department auctions and sold off by contractors to enterprises, which later supply these to the households.

Seed

Currently, all farmers in Kotha Armur buy seeds from the market. In 1961, practically all farmers preserved seeds. And those who borrowed, would pay back after the harvest at a 50% higher rate. "Each cultivator generally preserves his requirement of seed from year to year. In a few cases, they are borrowed or purchased. Where the seeds are borrowed, he will pay 25% more at the time of harvest. There are no cases of using improved seeds."(Census Monograph, 1961:36).

There were 30 seed companies in and around Kotha Armur in 2001. At least 18 of these companies were engaged in processing plants for the region. High-yield variety seeds began to be used regularly in the 1990s, and the yields in paddy and maize increased substantially in a short period of time. In 2001, the return on paddy, according to the estimates of the author were Rs.13, 500-Rs.19, 500 per acre, and on seed crop of maize were between Rs.14, 000-Rs.17, 500. For turmeric, which was the highest yielding crop, it was Rs.65, 000-Rs.91, 000. Every farmer, from marginal up to large, had at least 2 acres in turmeric (Reddy, 2008)

Labour

In 1929, 31 families in the village earned their livelihood solely from manual labour, out of which, 17 families were from Dalit community. The daily wage was 5 paise 4 anna for men, and 2 paise 8 anna for women. In addition to this, many members from these 31 families had gone to work as wage labourers at cotton mills in Bombay. Kotha Armur, as mentioned above, had a tradition of cotton-weaving and the Bombay mills offered a degree of familiarity with the work. There was a dearth of agricultural labour in Kotha Armur in 1961. The availability of canal water increased intensive wet cultivation which

resulted in demand for more labour. The land reforms and the beedi factories also resulted in shortage of agricultural labour in the village.

In 1961, farmers met the requirements of agricultural labour by employing people residing in Kotha Armur who earned their livelihood by labouring on others' farms, people from neighbouring villages, seasonal migratory labour who came from dry regions to canal-irrigated areas for wage work, from within their own family, and through attached agricultural labour." Besides these, some of the poor peasants work for each other not on a wage basis but on a basis of mutual cooperation."(Census Monograph, 1961: 38). Except at the time of harvest, labour was paid in cash. At the time of harvest, too, wages were sometimes paid in cash, especially for turmeric crop.

In 1961, the attached labour was paid in the range of Rs.25 and Rs.30 per month. Boys who were employed to look after the cattle were paid between Rs.9 and Rs.15 per month, depending on their age. The wages were paid in advance, at the time of appointment. In this village, "the practice of giving food to the laborers in the morning or evening is extinct." (ibid: 39) In case the labour negotiated to be served food, the wage rate in cash would decrease. Extra rations of paddy or other grains were given at the time of festivals and harvests.

The rate of agricultural wage work raised through the decade of the 1950s (Census Monograph, 1961). The increase in wages were interpreted differently by the employer and the employee. According to former, efficiency in labour had not increased keeping in tune with the increase in wages, and the indifference of field labourers required constant supervision, which meant an added expense. On the other hand, labourers complained

that the increase in wages were not commensurate with rising costs and the standard of life.

Occupations

In 1929, out of the 32 landholders, 27 were owner-cultivators and 5 were non-cultivating owners. Of these 5, 2 were village officers, 1 *deshmukh*, 1 trader and 1 coolie. Of the 27 owner-cultivators, 6 had subsidiary occupations. Weaving and agriculture were the only major occupations in Kotha Armur. As mentioned earlier, weavers did not engage in agriculture. Some weavers and individuals from Schedule Castes had migrated to Bombay to work in cotton mills.

In 1949, crossover between agriculture and weaving was visible. 38 out of 41 weaving families were holding and cultivating small bits of land. In 1961, from the sample of 100 households surveyed, 29 households were engaged in cultivation, 6 households were engaged in caste-based work, 7 in business, and 59 were engaged in other occupations like agricultural labour, toddy-tapping, working in cotton mills, tea stalls, clerk at factories, teaching, sweeping, midwifery, cleaning in lorry services, mat-making, tailoring, pottery, shoe making, gold smithy, washing clothes, itinerant business and stone-cutting. Weaving and beedi making employed a large number of labourers from Kotha Armur apart from agriculture.

The main work of the residents of the village were cultivation both as owners and tenants, agricultural labour, beedi making and weaving. From the surveyed households, 46 were engaged in farming, of which 35 were male and 11 were female. Of the total 46 engaged in agricultural wage work, 8 were male and 38 were female. In beedi making, there were

69 workers of which 10 were male and 59 were female. Out of a total of 23 workers engaged in weaving, 7 were male and 16 were female workers. 11 people, all male, were engaged in toddy-tapping. 5 males worked as attached labour. 5 males also worked in cotton mills. 2 worked as clerks in the beedi factory. 7 males were engaged in stone-cutting.

The table from 1997-98 survey (in the next page) is indicative of the diversification of occupations in Kotha Armur. Presently, there is even more diversity and this will be discussed in the next chapter.

According to 2011 census, the total population was 3229, out of which there were a total of 1584 main workers, 119 marginal workers and 1526 non-workers. The share of both cultivators and agricultural labourers has fallen steadily since 1961, with an upward turn only in the decade between 1971 and 1981. It declined drastically in the 10 years between 2001 and 2011.

Table 3.7: Caste-wise Occupational Diversification in Kotha Armur 1997-98

	Caste	1. Cultivator	2. Agricultural Labour	3. Beedi worker	4. Beedi factory worker	5. Agri allied activities	6. Toddy tapping	7. Seeds/Fertilizer	8. Doctors/Lawyers	9. Petty Shop	10. Transport	11. Govt Employee	12. Traditional Services	13. Other gainful employment	14. Pensioners	15. Unemployed	Total Workers
FC	Reddys	11	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	-	-	6	-	-	1	2	24
,	GuratiKapu	14	21	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	3	-	-	46
,	Vaishya	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
,	Munuu Kapu	2	3	8	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	4	-	7	1	-	31
BC	Devanga	26	8	158	28	2	-	-	-	9	1	9	-	10	21	10	301
,	Gouda	11	17	45	-	-	40	1	2	-	1	1	-	22	4	2	145
,	Ayyavarlu	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	2	-	5	-	1	10
,	Mera	-	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	3	-	-	8
,	Mangali	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	4	-	-	8
,	Vadla	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	3
,	Kamsali	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	2
,	Chakali	-	4	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	3	6	-	1	15
,	Kummari	-	28	2	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	4	6	-	-	41
,	Mudiraj	-	22	-	5	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	3	-	-	32
,	Tenugu	-	21	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	7	1	-	31
,	Golla	-	14	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	18
,	Goondla	3	25	15	1	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	10	2	1	60

,	Patkari	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	4	-	-	9
,	Padmasali	1	2	-	3	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	8
,	Poosavarlu	-	5	15	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	-	-	2	29
SC	Mala	18	45	16	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	8	4	-	72
	Madiga	39	97	25	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	3	167
Total		126	326	267	38	5	40	3	4	17	12	24	70	42	37	22	924
*		(13.6)	(35.8)	(28.2)	(4.1)	(5.7)	(4.3)	(0.31)	(0.31)	(2.6)	(1.29)	(2.58)	(7.57)	(4.54)	(4.0)	(2.3)	(100.0)

Note: *Parenthesis – Percentage share of workers in each occupation (workers exclude pensioners).

Source: Compiled by DNR

In 2011, of the main workers, only 9.3% were cultivators, 9.5% were agricultural labourers, 32.5% were engaged in household industry dominated by women who formed 92% of workers, and 45.9% were 'other workers'.¹⁸ The workforce of the village in agriculture was about 19% of the total population. The other 81% workforce was engaged in employment outside agriculture. The percentage of the workforce in agriculture has decreased by more than half in ten years' time. This is indicative of a major demographic shift to non-farm work and will be taken up for discussion in the next chapter.

Importantly, Kotha Armur has a long history of remittances. Between 1920s and 1990s a major source of remittance came from Bombay, and since then remittance has been mainly coming from Dubai.

Education

As with many other parts of rural India, the literacy rate for both men and women in Kotha Armur saw a steady increase. Kotha Armur's literacy rate in 2011 was 70.92%. For males, it was 82.44% and for females it was 59.77%.

Table 2.8: Progress of Literacy in Kotha Armur from a Comparative Perspective (1961-2011)

Year	Kotha Armur			Nizamabad District			Andhra Pradesh		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
1961	29.7	2.9	15.3	22.98	5.7	14.32	15.2	6.0	21.2
1971	35.9	7.0	21.6	26.1	8.2	17.2	33.2	15.8	24.6
1981	38.4	6.1	22.5	31.9	11.7	21.7	39.3	20.4	29.9
1991	46.0	18.8	32.1	47.3	21.4	34.2	55.1	32.7	44.1
2001	74.0	43.9	58.9	57.0	36.0	46.0	70.85	51.17	61.11
2011	82.44	59.77	70.9	73.76	62.62	68.26	74.88	59.15	67.02

Source: D Narasimha Reddy (2008), Census 2011

¹⁸ 'Other workers' are from non-farm sector.

There has been a notable and persistent inequality between male and female literacy rates throughout, even for the decade of the 1990s. In 2011, both men and women recorded the highest literacy rate, at 82.44% and 59.77% respectively. In 2001, at the time the survey concluded, total literacy was 59%, male literacy was 74% and female literacy 44%. The percentage was massively skewed in favour of males. A similar gap has been the norm from the very first census. In 1961, male literacy was low at 29.7% but for females this figure was a meagre 2.9%. Even in 1981, female literacy rate was only 6.1%. It was in the 1980s that female literacy started recovering percentage points in comparison with males. From 1981 to 1991, male literacy grew from 38.4% to 46%, but female literacy grew from 6.1% to 18.8%, and it was the first time that female literacy rate had jumped in comparison to the male literacy rates. Between 1991 and 2001, both male and female literacy rate grew exponentially. For the former, it jumped from 43.9% to 74%, and for the latter, 13.8% to 43.9%.

Comparing this with district and state figures for 2001, Kotha Armur with 58.9% fared quite well against the Nizamabad total literacy rate which was at 46%, with a percentage difference point of 17 for males in Kotha Armur and Nizamabad, and 8 for females. Kotha Armur male literacy rate came ahead of the state (then Andhra Pradesh) rate by 4 percentage points, though in the case of females, Kotha Armur was behind by 7 points. On the whole, Kotha Armur was close to total literacy with that of the entire state.

Reddy writes "a positive sign is that the caste differences between SCs and others in the enrolment of boys in the age group of 5-14 years have been wiped out, but the differential treatment of girls persists. Also, there are certain Backward Castes like Padmashali,

Chakali and Goundla whose literacy is abysmally low, lower than that of SCs. They lag behind in school enrolments and suffer high drop-out rates" (p.95-96).

Conclusion

Kotha Armur, like many other villages, has seen rapid expansion in all fronts. The beginning of Nizamsagar canal's operation in the first half of the 1940s provided the impetus for agricultural expansion, and as a result, large scale demographic changes. Population grew rapidly in two decades of 1950s and 1960s, and has been characterized as "irrigation-induced." (Reddy, 2008). The slow growth of population in the 1970s and 1980s was probably due to out-migration. But beginning in the 1990s, there was yet another surge in population, in contrast with demographic trends in the whole of Andhra Pradesh due to decline in fertility. The rise can be explained through the expansion of groundwater based irrigation (ibid: 95-96).

Beginning in the late 1980s, dynamism in agriculture as well as growth in non-agricultural sector pushed up the workforce participation rate in Kotha Armur. Bore-wells and electricity connections for agricultural use were the two main factors that brought about this dynamism. Cultivators and agricultural labourers put together, agriculture employed about 40% in 1961, 35% in 1971, 51% in 1981, and 50% of the workforce in 1991, but in 2001 the corresponding figure was down to 41%. In 2011, cultivators and agricultural labourers together constituted only 19% of the workforce in Kotha Armur.¹⁹

This substantial reduction was due to the emergence of the beedi industry as a major

¹⁹ It could be because many inhabitants of this village are engaged in non-farm activities. The agricultural labour working in Kotha Armur is mostly from outside the village. Due to expansion of Armoor town, some of the farmers sold their land in the village and bought land outside in other villages, which cannot be accounted for here.

source of employment. The beedi industry employs many women, and hence the female workforce participation rate is quite high.

Three crucial factors linked up with the transformation of Kotha Armur are the expansion of Armoor town which is taking up cultivable land for its growth, the growth of the beedi industry which is the largest employer and predominantly employs women in Kotha Armur, and the migration male members to Dubai from Kotha Armur. The next chapter will discuss these issues in detail.

Chapter 4

Changing Agrarian Relations and Occupational Diversity

"As has been generally the case for much of India, control of land implied also control over people and their labour power. This is no longer the case."

- John Harriss et al (2012)

Introduction

This chapter presents analysis of occupational structure of the village of Kotha Armur. People from this village engage in a multiplicity of occupations. Unlike the traditional rural household which was defined in terms of a single occupation, each household in this village has members in different occupational categories. The aim is to look at the occupational structure through the categories of caste, class (land ownership) and landlessness.

The literature points towards the occupational structure and mobility in India as "socially regulated"(Harris-white). However, occupations are temporary and impermanent for a majority of villagers in Kotha Armur. "Rural households or individuals may pursue a number of different activities, resulting in 'pluriactive' households or individuals" (Reddy, 2014)

Armur town was once known for silk weaving and the silk trade. With the destruction of hand-loom weaving as the traditional occupation, Devangas took to beedi industry in 1950s with establishment of the beedi industry in the region, Armur town is one of the important centres for the beedi industry and it is most significant non-agricultural form of employment for the a large number of women in the region. Along with beedi, the seed

industry is dominant in Armur. These have significantly contributed to the town's development.

Many households from Kotha Armur are directly related to the beedi industry. Women are primarily beedi rollers who work from home. Men work in the beedi industry in various capacities.

The seed industry mainly employs people as seed agents. Most of the farmers in the village and in the region have contracts to produce seeds for the industry. Farmers get into seasonal contracts for growing seed for the industry. There are 55 registered seed companies in Armur town.

Irrigation requirements in Kotha Armur is largely met by bore-wells. A channel of the Nizamsagar canal passes through it but is largely unreliable.

4.1 Occupations in the village

People from this village and region migrate to West Asia for work. There were about 128 people living and working in West Asia or once worked in West Asia. Scheduled Castes and Other Backward Castes have greater number of migrants to West Asia. And the beedi industry at Armur employs 404 people from the village.

Other occupations include running retail stores, auto drivers, motor pump mechanics, seed agents, salaried professionals and government workers (see Table 4.1). The number of people working outside agricultural are significantly more than people working in agriculture.

Gurati Kapus, Malas and Madigas are the three caste groups which are active in agriculture today.

Table 4.1. Occupational Diversity in Kotha Armur:

Occupation Categories	Various Occupations Under Each Category
Self-Employment	Cable TV agents, Auto drivers, Bakery owner, Hardware shop, Internet-Café owner, pan-shop, Hotel owner, Motor winding shop, welding, Money lender, General stores, Chicken center, PCO, Stove Repair store, TV- mechanic, Scooter Mechanic, Cooler Mechanic, Cell and Watch shop, Footwear shops, RMP, Grinding Mill, Cell-Tower Maintenance, Medical stores, Liquor shops, Cloth Stores, Milk Business, Dairy Farms, Seed Agents, Water Supplier, <i>Tent Houses</i> (objects like chairs, plates, tents etc. are rented out for social gatherings).
Salaried-Employment	Government Teachers, Private School Teachers, News Reporters, Typist, IT workers, Retired Industrial Worker, Commercial Tax Officer, Asst. Clerk (LDC), Clerks at various other places, PA for an Advocate, Sweepers at Government Institutes, Employee at Tractor Showroom, Watch-Men, New-Paper Agents, Retired VRO, Post-Man, Asst. Professor, Retired Ex. Engineer, Retired Asst. Bank Manager, MD Doctor, Retired Market Officer, DSP and various other jobs.
Traditional-Employment	1. Toddy Tapping by Goud caste group among OBCs. 2. Laundry by Chakali caste group among OBCs. 3. Hair-Cutting by Mangali caste group among OBCs. 4. Tailoring by Mera caste group among OBCs. 5. Fishing by Goondla caste group among OBCs. 6. Shoe-mending and making by Dhor caste group among SCs.

*Apart from Cultivators, Agricultural Labour and Beedi- Industry workers.

4.2: Caste wise Distribution of occupations of working men

Caste	Cultivation	Agri. Labour	Beedi Industry	Non-Farm Casual Labour	Self-Employed	Salaried Employment	Traditional Occupation	Dubai Migration	Total
SC	27 (34.18)	5 (100)	0 (0)	7 (21.87)	4 (3.47)	11 (14.66)	4 (6.89)	17 (20.23)	75
OBC	16 (20.25)	0 (0)	54 (100)	24 (75)	102 (88.69)	51 (68)	54 (93.11)	65 (77.38)	366
OC	36 (45.66)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (3.12)	9 (3.25)	13 (17.33)	0 (0)	2 (2.38)	61
Total	79 (100)	5 (100)	54 (100)	32 (100)	115 (100)	75 (100)	58 (100)	84 (100)	502

*Percentage in parentheses, In addition, five Reddy households migrated to Europe and North America

.Data was collected on 502 working men. Out of 502 men, 79(15.73%) are cultivators, 5(0.99%) are agricultural labourers, 54(10.75%) men work in the beedi industry, 32(6.37%) are non-farm casual labourers, 115(22.9%) men are self-employed, 58(11.55%) are into traditional occupations, 84(16.73%) men have migrated to Dubai (West Asia) and 7(1.39%) men reported having other occupations in addition to cultivation.

84 men are into agriculture and agriculture-related activities in capacities of cultivators and agricultural wage labourers. 16.73% of the men surveyed are in agriculture.

334 men are into non-farm employment in the village. Thus, 66.53% of the men are employed in the non-farm sector and do not engage in agricultural work. 84 men from the village have migrated to Dubai and other parts of West Asia. This group comprises 16.73% of the total men surveyed in the village.

4.3 Caste wise Distribution of occupations of working Women

Caste	Cultivation	Agricultural Labour	Beedi Rolling	Non-Farm Labour	Tailor	Salaried Employment	Traditional Occupation	Agriculture + Beedi rolling	Total
SC	26 (40.62)	9 (90)	18 (5.14)	0 (0)	2 (25)	3 (18.75)	0 (0)	16 (80)	74
OBC	9 (14.06)	0	330 (94.28)	1 (100)	5 (62.5)	10 (62.5)	6 (100)	4 (20)	365
OC	29 (45.31)	1 (10)	2 (0.57)	0 (0)	1 (12.5)	3 (18.75)	0 (0)	0 (0)	36
Total	64 (100)	10 (100)	350 (100)	1 (100)	8 (100)	16 (100)	6 (100)	20 (100)	475

Source: Field data by researcher

All the 29 women from OC cultivator category are all from Gurati Kapu. None of them are from Reddy households.

Agricultural labor in this village is carried out through the terms of ‘exchange labor’. Women work in other’s fields only as a rule that the owner of that field works in return in their field. There are very few women who actually work on land as hired wage labourers. Only 74 out of 475 women surveyed are active in agriculture. They constitute 15.57% of the total female working population.

Most of the women from OBC households of Devangas and Goud caste groups engage in beedi rolling. Beedi rolling has entered this village several years ago, as early as 1950s. Women from OBC households took to beedi rolling as their traditional occupations were destroyed. For OBC women agricultural labor was not a desirable option as it was considered degrading.

All the 6 women engaged in ‘traditional occupation’ are washer- women from Chakali caste group.

Most of the ‘more than one occupation’ category (see table) members are from Madiga caste group of SC category. These women are engaged in agriculture and beedi rolling. Beedi rolling is mostly taken in when there no agricultural work.

Scheduled Castes (SC) Occupations

There are five caste groups under Scheduled Caste: Madiga, Mala, Dhor, Mashitla and Ghoska

Table 4.4: Occupations SC (male)

SC	Cultivation	Agricultural Labor	Beedi Industry	Non-Farm Labor	Self-Employed	Salaried-Employment	Traditional Occupation	Migration to Dubai	Total
Madiga	13 (30.95)	2 (4.76)	0 (0)	2 (4.76)	3 (7.14)	9 (21.42)	0 (0)	13 (30.95)	42 (100)
Mala	14 (66.66)	1 (4.76)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (4.76)	1 (4.76)	0 (0)	4 (19.04)	21 (100)
Other SCs	0 (0)	2 (16.66)	0 (0)	5 (41.66)	0 (0)	1 (8.33)	4 (33.33)	0 (0)	12 (100)
Total	27 (36)	5 (6.66)	0 (0)	7 (9.33)	4 (5.33)	11 (14.66)	4 (5.33)	17 (22.66)	75 (100)

Source: Field data by researcher

9 Madiga men are working at Gram Panchayat as peons and sweepers. This constitutes salaried employed for Madiga men. 1 member for Dhora, here categorized into ‘Other SCs’, is employed as Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP). It is mentioned here under salaried employment.

4 men mentioned under the category ‘Traditional Employment’ have set up Cobbler shops. Shoe making and mending is their Traditional occupation. Total 27 reported their main occupation as cultivators. Many persons from this group in the past were employed as attached agriculture labour.

Table 4.5: Occupations of SCs (Females):

SC	Cultivation	Agricultural Labor	Beedi Rolling	Non-Farm Labor	Tailor	Salaried Employment	Traditional Occupation	Agriculture+ Beedi rolling	Total
Madiga	15 (35.71)	5 (11.90)	3 (7.14)	0 (0)	0 (0)	3 (7.14)	0 (0)	16 (38.09)	42 (100)
Mala	11 (66.66)	2 (9.52)	6 (28.57)	0 (0)	2 (9.52)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	21 (100)
Other SCs	0 (0)	2 (18.18)	9 (81.81)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	11 (100)
Total	26 (35.13)	9 (12.16)	18 (24.32)	0 (0)	2 (2.70)	3 (4.05)	0 (0)	16 (21.62)	74 (100)

Source: Field data by researcher

2 of the ‘salaried employed’ women are working with Gram Panchayat, and the other is a cook in Government school. Women in SC households today mostly engage in agriculture as own cultivators. Before women from SC households used to work as agricultural labourers, now they engage in agricultural labour work only if it is necessary. Women engage in own cultivation or agricultural labour also engage in beedi rolling when there is no agricultural work. Two women also engage in tailoring.

Table 4.6: Occupations Madiga Caste

Size of holding	Number of holdings	Acreage	Number of households
Landless	-	-	7
Marginal	31	35.5	31
Small	6	20	6
Semi-medium	-	-	-
Medium	-	-	-
Large	-	-	-
Total	37	55.5	44

Source: Field data by researcher

44 Madiga households were surveyed, out of which 7 were landless and 37 households owned land. Majority of the landowners held marginal lands. This caste group cumulatively owns 55.5 acres of land. 36 households are engaged in agriculture both as owner-cultivators and as wage labourers. In many cases, the two roles are occupied the same individual since Madiga households own only marginal and small plots.

One man owns a sanitary hardware shop in Armur town. Two men are auto drivers. One person owns a small dairy farm and his wife is employed as cook in Government school. One man works in a government veterinary hospital, and 2 in setting up tents for occasions and functions, and 5 are employed by the Gram Panchayat as sweepers.

13 men are illiterate, 9 studied till class 5, 20 studied till class 10, not a single man in the current working age group has studied till intermediate level. 23 women are illiterate, 20 women studied till class 5, and a single woman studied till class 10.

13 households have members who migrated to Dubai. The ones who migrated are all men, and in their absence, the women in the same households engage in cultivation as both owner-cultivators and agricultural labourers. The other important job held by women from this caste group is beedi rolling.

One person from the Madiga caste group said he was employed as *jeethagadu* (attached labour) since he was 7 years old and he worked as *jeethagadu* till he became 25 years old, after that he migrated to Dubai for wage work. His four brothers were employed as *jeethagallu*. He and two other brothers also migrated to Dubai to work at construction sites. Now he bought 2 acres of land. Along with the two acres land he leased in 3 acres and now cultivates turmeric and *Jowar* on contract with Seed Company. His first

employment as *jeethagadu* was cattle rearing, for which he was Rs. 30 as monthly wage. Only when he was 15 years old he could be allowed to plough the land and was paid Rs. 5000 as *jeetham*.

Today no one from this village is employed as *jeethagadu*. Men migrated to Dubai (West Asia), from the Scheduled Caste (SC) households are interested to buy agricultural land for cultivation. Few bought agricultural lands in the neighbouring villages as the land prices in this village are very high.

Table 4.7: Occupations of Mala Caste

Size of holding	Number of holdings	Acreage	Number of households
Landless	-	-	2
Marginal	18	38	18
Small	1	4	1
Semi-medium	-	-	-
Medium	-	-	-
Large	-	-	-
Total	19	42	21

Source: Field data by researcher

21 Mala households were surveyed, out of which 2 are landless and 19 own land. The highest individual landholding in this caste group is 4 acres, rest of the landholdings are marginal.

16 households are active in agriculture both as cultivator-owners and as wage labourers. Men from 4 households migrated to Dubai for work. Most of the other men work as agricultural labourers and other forms of labour for which they go to towns and cities. For instance, one man has a motor-winding shop and another works in the RTA.

Women from 13 households are active in agricultural work as both owner-cultivators and wage labourers. 5 women roll beedis in addition to agricultural work. 2 women are tailors.

6 men are illiterate, 3 men studied till class 5, and 12 men studied till class 10.

8 women are illiterate and 13 women studied till class 5.

Dhor

There are 7 Dhor households of which not a single one is into agriculture. 3 are landless and each of the other 4 owns 0.5 acres of land which they do not cultivate. 4 families own petty shops and members of other 2 households are casual labourers. A man from the only remaining family works in the police department, who at the time of fieldwork was holding the post of Deputy Superintendent of Police in the Excise department. All the women from this caste group are engaged in beedi rolling. 1 man is illiterate, 1 man studied till class 5, 2 men studied till class 10, 1 man studied till intermediate level, and 2 men hold under-graduate degrees. 1 woman is illiterate, 3 women studied till class 5, and 2 women studied till 10.

Mashitla

There are 3 Mashitla households and no land is owned by them. Men are casual labourers and women are beedi rollers. All of them are illiterate and did not receive any formal education.

Goshka

There are 2 Goshka households and both are landless. Men from both households are attached labourers. The women are agricultural labourers.

Occupations of Other Backward Castes(OBC)

The OBC category has 13 caste groups: Devanga, Gouds, Munnuru Kapu, Chakali, Goondla, Mangali, Mera, Padmashali, Poosala, Vishwabrahmin, Kummari and Satani

Table 4.8 : Occupations of OBCs (Male):

OBC	Cultivation	Agricultural Labor	Beedi Industry	Non-Farm Labor	Self-Employed	Salaried-Employment	Traditional Occupation	Migration to Dubai	Total
Devanga	0 (0)	0 (0)	49 (23.33)	16 (7.6)	63 (30)	37 (17.62)	0 (0)	45 (21.43)	210 (100)
Gouds	5 (6.84)	0 (0)	1 (1.36)	6 (8.21)	19 (26.02)	7 (9.58)	30 (41.09)	5 (6.84)	73 (100)
Other OBCs	11 (13.25)	0 (0)	4 (4.81)	2 (2.40)	20 (24.09)	7 (8.43)	24 (28.91)	15 (18.07)	83 (100)
Total	16 (4.37)	0 (0)	54 (14.75)	24 (6.55)	102 (27.86)	51 (13.93)	54 (14.75)	65 (17.75)	366 (100)

Source: Field data by researcher

Table 4.9 Occupations of OBCs (Females):

OBC	Cultivation	Agricultural Labor	Beedi Rolling	Non-Farm Labor	Tailor	Salaried Employment	Traditional Occupation	Agriculture + Beedi rolling	Total
Devanga	0 (0)	0 (0)	189 (95.45)	1 (0.5)	1 (0.5)	7 (3.53)	0 (0)	0 (0)	198 (100)
Gouds	0 (0)	0 (0)	70 (97.22)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (2.78)	72 (100)
Other OBCs	9 (9.47)	0 (0)	71 (74.73)	0 (0)	0 (0)	3 (3.15)	10 (10.52)	2 (2.10)	95 (100)
Total	9 (2.46)	0 (0)	330 (90.41)	1 (0.27)	1 (0.27)	10 (2.73)	10 (2.73)	4 (1.09)	365 (100)

Source: Field data by researcher

5 of the women cultivators in OBCs are Munnuru Kapus. The rest of the 4 are from Chakali caste who also engage in laundry which is their traditional occupation.

Women members from 190 households are engaged in beedi rolling, 3 are teachers in private schools, 2 are teachers in government schools, and one each is a nurse and tailor. Data on women's work of the remaining households could not be acquired.

9 men are illiterate and have received no formal education, 26 men studied up to class 5, 141 studied till class 10, 3 studied till intermediate level, 29 hold under-graduate degrees, and one man holds post-graduate degree. Data relating to men from the remaining 22 households could not be acquired by this researcher. 25 women are illiterate, 66 women studied till class 5, 86 women studied till class 10 and 4 till intermediate level. 5 women are under-graduate degree holders. Data relating to women from the remaining 44 households could not be acquired by this researcher.

5 of the women cultivators in OBCs are Munnuru Kapus. The rest of the 4 are from Chakali caste who also engage in laundry which is their traditional occupation.

Devanga

Almost 30% of the total households in the village belong to this caste group. 24 households own land and all are marginal farmers. The biggest landholding of any household of this caste group is 2 acres. The total land owned cumulatively by 24 households is 18 acres. None of the Devanga households are cultivators. They area into a diversity of non-farm occupations.

The traditional caste occupation of Devangas was weaving. In Kotha Armur, Devangas were into weaving cotton clothes. After the destruction of hand-weaving due to introduction of machine-weaving, the Devangas had to search for new modes of livelihood. They became 'loom-less'. Since the 1920s, a steady stream of migration among Devangas from the village to Bombay has been recorded. In Bombay, they sought out work at the cotton and cloth mills.

Devangas did not own any land in 1929, as shown in the Economic Survey conducted by S K Iyengar. Because of the higher wages in Bombay, some Devanga families purchased agricultural land in the village and also constructed houses in the village.

Though they migrated, it was not a permanent move and most families returned to Kotha Armur by the 1990s. Even when migration to Bombay was high, Devanga families did not fully settle in Bombay but kept coming back to the village. The wages offered in the mills were better in the mills compared to the wages in agriculture and other sectors in the village. Only one family settled in Bombay and did not return to Kotha Armur. Since 1980s, members of Devanga families have started migrating to Dubai.

Male members from 17 households have or had government jobs. 6 are retired government school teachers, 5 are currently employed as teachers in government schools, 2 are RTC bus conductors, one works at Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), one is a commercial tax officer, and one each works as an attendant and a clerk at government colleges.

Male members from 15 households are auto drivers, 48 are employed in different capacities in the beedi industry (8 beedi commission agents, 16 beedi checkers, 22 beedi

packers, 2 beedi rollers), 3 are private school teachers and one is a lecturer at a private college in Nizamabad. One man owns and runs a bakery, one owns and rents out tents and accessories for functions, 2 are cable TV operators, 10 reported themselves as casual labourers, one owns and runs an electronic store specializing in mobile phones, 2 are engaged in cell tower maintenance, and one runs a chicken centre. There are also an assistant to a chartered accountant, an office clerk, 3 hotel cooks, a cooler mechanic, 2 financiers, 3 salesmen. 39 households have petty businesses which include general stores, internet café, tailor shops, small financing, hardware shops, motor-windings, pan shops, chicken centres, auto mechanic stores, gas stove repairs, fertilizer shops etc.

2 men are working as software engineers in Hyderabad, one is a local news reporter, one is a typist in a newspaper office and one is a newspaper distribution agent. 2 men work in the Gram Panchayat, one is a watchman in a rice mill, one is a welder, and one is a young advocate.

Men from 46 Devanga households have migrated to West Asia, predominantly Dubai. There are also 30 men who previously worked in Dubai but have now returned to the village permanently. They are variously employed in beedi factories, own various kinds of stores and are self-employed as mechanics, tailors etc.

Gouds

Toddy tapping is the traditional occupation of this caste group.

Gouds are the numerically second to Devanga caste group. The members from this caste group own very less land in the village. 30 men from this caste engage in their traditional

occupation of today tapping. Members from this caste group sold away land they had before. Women from this caste group engage in beedi rolling.

Table 4.10 Occupations of Munnuru Kapu Caste:

Size of holding	Number of holdings	Acreage	Number of households
Landless	-	-	7
Marginal	2	4	2
Small	6	25	6
Semi-medium	2	16	2
Medium	-	-	-
Large	-	-	-
Total	10	45	17

Source: Field data by researcher

Out of the 17 Munnuru Kapu households surveyed, 10 own agricultural land and 7 are landless. 2 households own less than 3 acres of land and are marginal landowners, 6 households are small landowners owning between 3 and 5 acres, and 2 households are medium landowners owning between 5 and 10 acres of land. The total land owned by this caste group was 45 acres.

2 male members of this caste group have migrated to Dubai for work, of which 1 has no land and the other has 4 acres for land. In the families of the two men who migrated to Dubai, one woman rolls beedis, and the woman from the landless family works as an *anganwadi* teacher in the neighbouring village of Hansapur. Both the man and the woman from this landless household hold under-graduate degrees.

Out of the 10 landowning households, 6 are actively engaged in agriculture. In these 6 households, all men and women are into agriculture. 2 women are additionally engaged

in beedi rolling. Only 2 men holds a subsidiary occupation as a financier from these 6 households.

5 male members of this caste group, belonging to families which are no longer active in agriculture, are government employees. One man is a retired teacher and his wife is currently a government school teacher. Another man was a clerk at a government college, now retired. Another man holds a job at the MRO office, and another is employed at a primary health centre.

One male member from this caste group is a Registered Medical Practitioner (RMP). Another male member is the owner of 'pindi girni' (grain grinding shop) in Nizamabad town. One male member is a tailor, whose shop is in Balkonda village.

6 women are actively engaged in agriculture, of which 2 are also additionally engaged in beedi rolling. These 2 women are part of 10 women who work as beedi rollers. One is an *anganwadi* teacher, as already mentioned above. Another woman is a government teacher.

Only one man from this caste group is illiterate. 3 men studied up to class 5. 7 men reported to have studied till class 10. 2 studied up to inter-mediate level, and 4 held under-graduate degrees.

In the case of women, one woman is illiterate. 6 women studied till class 5. 7 women completed their studies till class 10. A single woman finished inter-mediate, while 2 women held under-graduate degrees.

Table 4.11: Occupations of Chakali Caste:

Size of holding	Number of holdings	Acreage	Number of households
Landless	-	-	2
Marginal	13	13	13
Small			
Semi-medium			
Medium			
Large			
Total	13	13	15

Source: Field data by researcher

Traditionally, Chakalis were a community of washermen. There are 15 Chakali households in Kotha Armur, out of which 13 own marginal plots and 2 are landless. Women from 4 households roll beedis and they do not do agricultural work. 5 households are engaged in agriculture from which women work as washerwomen in addition to working as agricultural labourers. All men from this group work as agricultural labourers and one man is a moneylender.

Only one household does full-time laundry work without any agricultural work. One man works in cell tower maintenance. 2 men migrated to Dubai for work, and another man who was working in Dubai died there. One man returned from Dubai.

5 men are illiterate, 1 man studied till class 5, 5 men studied till class 10 and one man holds under-graduate degree. 7 women are illiterate, 4 women studied till class 5, and 2 women studied till class 10.

Goondla

25 Goondla households are present in the village, of which only one household owns agricultural land. The land owned by this family is 7 acres. Men from 17 households are fishermen and fish sellers. 2 men are beedi commission agents and one works at a beedi factory. One man owns and runs a general store. All the women from this caste group are engaged in beedi rolling. Apart from this, they also work as fish sellers. 11 men are illiterate, and 14 men finished up to secondary schooling.

Mangali

There are 4 Mangali households in the village. One of these families is landless while each of the other 3 owns 0.1 acres of land. Men from 3 of these households own and operate hair salons. One man went to Kuwait for work. Women are beedi rollers. The wife of the man who went to Kuwait is an *anganwadi* worker.

One man studied till primary school level and the rest of the men finished up to secondary school. One woman is illiterate, one woman studied in only primary school, and 2 studied up to secondary school.

Mera

Their traditional caste occupation is of tailoring. There are 7 Mera households in the village. 2 Mera men and 4 women are involved in their traditional occupation of tailoring. At the time of field work, men from 3 households were in Dubai for work, but 6 households had at some point of time had a male member working in Dubai. One household owns a general store and another runs a small tea shop. 4 women are tailors

and 3 are beedi rollers. All of the men received formal education till class 10. 5 women finished only primary schooling while 2 studied till the end of secondary school.

Padmashali

The traditional occupation of this caste group was weaving. There are presently 8 Padmashali households in the village.

3 households own and run chicken centres. A man from another household is a beedi packer, 2 men are casual labourers. 2 men work in Dubai. All the women are beedi rollers.

One man is illiterate, 3 received only primary schooling and 4 finished secondary school.

One woman is illiterate and 2 women finished primary school. Data regarding other women could not be acquired by the researcher.

Poosala

There are 16 Poosala households in the village, out of which 5 families own land. Each of these 5 families own 0.5 acres of land. Male members from 4 households migrated to Dubai for work. One man is a government teacher and one is a rural medical practitioner. 6 men have small businesses such as cloth stores. One man is an attender at a government college, and another is a mechanic. 2 men own and run chicken centres. All the women are engaged in beedi rolling.

2 men are illiterate, 5 received only primary education, 7 finished secondary school, and one studied up to intermediate level and one holds an under-graduate degree.

Vishwa Brahmin

There are 2 Vishwa Brahmin households in the village. Men from both these households are casual labourers and the women are beedi rollers.

Both men finished upto secondary school. One woman is illiterate and the other finished only primary school.

Kummari

There are 2 Kummari households. One man is a casual labourer and the other is a car driver. The casual labourer is illiterate, and the driver received formal education till secondary school.

Satani

There is only one Satani household which does not own any land. A male member who was educated till class 10 migrated to Oman for work.

Occupations of Other Castes (OCs)

There are 2 castes in this category: Reddy and Gurarti Kapu

Table 4.12: Occupations of OCs (Male):

OC	Cultivation	Agricultural Labor	Beedi Industry	Non-Farm Labor	Self-Employed	Salaried-Employment	Migration to Other Countries	Total
Gurati Kapu	28 (96.55)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (3.45)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	29 (100)
Reddy	8 (22.86)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	9 (25.71)	13 (37.14)	5 (14.28)	35 (100)
Total	36 (56.25)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (1.56)	9 (14.06)	13 (20.31)	5 (7.81)	64 (100)

Source: Field data by researcher

2 men from Gurati Kapu caste group are engaged in more than one occupation one is a seed agent and engaged in cultivation and the other is a money lender and is a cultivator.

2 men from 'Reddy caste group are engaged in more than one occupation, both are seed agents and are cultivators.

From Reddy households 2 men migrated to America, 1 to Canada and 1 to Switzerland.

2 men from Gurati Kapu have migrated to Dubai.

In Reddy caste group there is 1 Doctor with Post Graduation. , 1 Asst. Professor, 1 Public Prosecutor, 1 Govt. market Officer, 1 Asst. Manager in Bank, 1 is employed in Post Office at the village, 3 government school teacher, 1 is government Executive Engineer and 1 is Village Revenue Officer.

Table 4.13: Occupations OC (females):

OC	Cultivation	Agricultural Labor	Beedi Rolling	Non-Farm Labor	Tailor	Salaried Employment	Traditional Occupation	Total
Gurati Kapu	29 (93.54)	1 (3.22)	1 (3.22)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	29 (100)
Reddy	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (20)	0 (0)	1 (20)	3 (60)	0 (0)	5 (100)
Total	29 (80.55)	1 (2.77)	2 (5.55)	0 (0)	1 (2.77)	3 (8.33)	0 (0)	34 (100)

Source: Field data by researcher

All the 3 salaried Employed women are teachers. 1 is government and 2 are private school teachers.

Gurati Kapu

31 households were surveyed, out of which 28 households are engaged in agriculture. Only one household's main occupation was wage or casual labour. Men from 2 households migrated to Dubai. Only among these two Gurati Kapu household did not own land, and a male member of this family migrated to Dubai. The women of this family work as agricultural wage labourers. No member from this household received any formal education. The other family from which a man has gone to Dubai owned 4 acres of land. The man who migrated is educated till 10th class. Women from this family are owner-cultivators.

29 households had agriculture as their primary occupation. In the case of the remaining two landless families, wage work was primary occupation. One man from one of these landless families had migrated to Dubai, as already mentioned above. Women from this family were into agricultural wage work. In the other family, the man was an agricultural wage labourer and the women rolled beedi.

The incidence of subsidiary occupation holders is low among Gurati Kapus. One man, who was primarily an agriculturist owning, 8.5 acres also worked as a seed agent. Another man whose family owns 6 acres of land held a subsidiary occupation as agricultural financier.

In total, 29 households are primarily agricultural. Women from these households participate actively in agriculture.

Table 4.14: Occupations of Gurati Kapu Caste

Size of holding	Number of holdings	Acreage	Number of households
Landless	-	-	2
Marginal	1	2.5	1
Small	8	35	8
Semi-medium	18	141	18
Medium	2	24.5	2
Large	-	-	-
Total	29	203	31

Source: Field data by researcher

*Marginal = 0-3 acres, Small = 3-5 acres, Semi-medium = 5-10 acres, Medium = 10-25 acres, Large = above 25 acres

Gurati kapus are the dominant landholding caste group. Households from this caste group are actively engaged in agriculture. They did not own land much land traditionally, most of the land owned by them is bought over the period of time mostly from Reddy households. Along with Mala and Madiga caste groups Gurati Kapus engage in cultivation. They have invested in less in education and did not diversify their occupation. They bought agricultural lands in Kotha Armur and also bought land in the neighbouring villages.

Two men from two Gurati Kapu households had migrated to Dubai and are now working in the village and two are currently working in Dubai. These men belong to families each owning land of 3 and 5 acres respectively.

9 male members surveyed from this caste group were illiterate and did not receive any formal education. The corresponding number of illiterate women was 13.

5 male members reported having education till class 5. 12 females also reported to have received education till class 5. 11 males and 6 females reported to have been educated till class 10.

6 male members reported that they had studied formally up to intermediate level. No working woman had been educated beyond class 10.

Table 4.15 Occupations of Reddys Caste

Size of holding	Number of holdings	Acreage	Number of households
Landless	-	-	6
Marginal	14	28	14
Small	7	26	7
Semi-medium	6	54	6
Medium	2	30	2
Large	-	-	-
Total	29	138	35

Source: Field data by researcher

35 Reddy households were surveyed, out of which 6 households are landless. 29 Reddy households own a total land of 138 acres.

Only 8 out of 29 landowning households are active in agriculture. This indicates that rest of the landowners give their land out on tenancy. Majority of Reddy household members have residences outside the village apart from the village. Thus, information about Reddy households and holdings was partly acquired from others in the village. Among the 8 agricultural households, male members from 2 families are seed agents, and a member of another household is a government officer.

13 Reddy households own land in the village but have permanently migrated. Members of these households hold occupations elsewhere. 4 families are in Hyderabad, one each in

Sholapur, Nizamabad, Warangal and Peepli (a nearby town). Some families have migrated outside India: one family each to England, Canada and Switzerland, and 2 to the USA to pursue education and continued with professional life outside India.

11 Reddy households have businesses of their own. Of these, members from 2 households are seed agents, 2 own medical shops, one owns a liquor shop, one owns a JPC machine, one has a dairy farm, and 3 have other businesses in Sholapur and Hyderabad.

Male members of 14 households have salaried jobs. Members from 12 households have government jobs. These include an assistant professor in a university, a retired bank assistant manager, a retired market officer, a retired executive engineer, a retired VRO, 3 retired government teachers, 2 current government teachers, a currently working public prosecutor, a Doctor of Medicine (MD) in Hyderabad, a private teacher and a current post office worker.

Members of 5 households live and work outside India, of which 2 are based in the US, and one each in Canada, Switzerland and England. 3 members of these are software engineers, one holds a PhD in sciences from a Canadian university, and one is employed in a US supermarket.

Job data relating to women of 25 households could not be acquired by this researcher. Only one Reddy woman is into beedi rolling. One woman is a government teacher, 5 women are housewives, 2 are teachers in private schools and one is a tailor.

Out of the Reddy men, 3 studied up to class 10, 3 till intermediate level, 20 hold undergraduate degrees, 6 hold post-graduate degrees, and 2 have doctoral degrees.

Information relating to education of females was not available for 12 households. One woman studied up to class 5. 7 women studied till class 10. 6 women studied up to intermediate level. 9 women hold under-graduate degrees.

4.2 Agriculture

Historically, the Reddy caste group was in control of the maximum agricultural land in the village. It has progressively lost land and is inactive in agriculture today. Most of the Reddy households have members living and working outside the village, a majority of them in cities both in India and abroad. Levels of formal education are higher for the Reddy caste group, and many of them hold salaried, professional jobs both in the government and the private sector.

In terms of crops, turmeric is the most profitable crop. Along with turmeric, paddy and maize are cultivated. Jowar and bajra have since recently begun to be cultivated as seed crops.

The agrarian landholding structure has undergone a tremendous change in this village. The reasons for this are the proximity to town, political movements leading to land reforms and demographic change.

In Kotha Armur, presently (2010) there are 379 landholdings.²⁰ The average size of landholdings is 1.75 acres. Caste groups belonging to SCs are predominantly marginal and small farmers. Though many of the households own land, their individual holdings are marginal.

Three caste groups are majorly involved in agriculture: Gurati Kapu, Mala and Madiga.

²⁰ VRO office 2010, Kotha Armur

Reddys used to own most of the agricultural land in the village, but they have progressively sold their lands and diversified in other streams. Gurati Kapus bought most of the land from Reddys. Mala and Madiga caste groups own less land but are active in agriculture. Many members from this caste group migrated to Dubai and came back and bought lands in nearby villages.

Agricultural land is decreasing in the village as it is being converted into land for commercial use. This has reduced agricultural activity in this village. Many villagers are selling their agricultural land at real estate prices and buying lands in nearby villages where the land prices are cheaper compared to Kotha Armur. Due to these developments, the character of the village is undergoing a change.

Conversing with farmers, it became clear that many of them have plans to sell land in this village and buy land in nearby areas. The expansion of the town has raised land prices and speculation is common for landowners in Kotha Armur. There is a high presence of middlemen who try to facilitate land transactions between landowners and prospective buyers.

Gurati Kapus, who form a major chunk of rich farmers in the village, have not yet sold their lands, and are waiting for prices to go up higher before they sell their land. Some members from this caste group I spoke to told me that they already have plans to buy land in nearby villages.

Gouds, an OBC caste group, used to own substantial amount of land, but it was fragmented into small holdings. They were the first to sell their agricultural land. The traditional occupation today tapping gave them incomes from outside cultivation.

Table 4.16: Participation of Males and Females in Agriculture across Different Caste Groups:

Caste \ Gender	Males	Females
SC	27 (34.18)	26 (40.62)
OBC	16 (20.25)	9 (14.06)
OC	36 (45.66)	29 (45.31)
Total	79 (100)	64 (100)

*Percentage in parentheses

Source: Field data by researcher

Table 4.17: Gender-wise comparison of participation in Cultivation:

Gender \ Caste	SC	OBC	OC
Males	27(50.94)	16(64)	36(55.38)
Females	26(49.05)	9(36)	29(44.61)
Total	53(100)	25(100)	65(100)

*Percentage in parentheses

Source: Field data by researcher

With the agriculture not being the dominant sector for employment the social relations have undergone considerable change. The landowning dominant caste lost their authority and control over other caste group members. One of the main reason being the beedi

industry. Women who were once majority of the labour in agriculture withdrew from the agricultural work and shifted to beedi industry. Since 1950s women gradually moved away from agricultural work mostly from OBC groups. From SC households too women started to move away by engaging in beedi work when there was no agricultural work available. This has made the landowning caste the Reddys to sell their land and move away from agriculture. The agriculture in the village had to depend on labour from out the village. Today the labour from far and distance place migrate to Kotha Armur in the peak periods of agricultural cycle. They come in gangs, and live here till they get work and go back to their places. These gangs of labour organize themselves and one of the members come and negotiate the contract. The wages to these gangs are paid in piece rate. The members in gangs are not permanent. Every agricultural season they composition of the gangs vary. The people who are members of this arrangement are mostly from particular village.

SC men were once dependent on agriculture as attached labour also started to move away, now considerable men from SCs households migrate to West Asia for wage work, and invest in buying lands in the nearby villages.

The irrigation in this village has undergone significant change. In 1920s agriculture in this village was solely dependent on monsoon. With the advent of bore well technology, the irrigation has improved. Most of the lands which were once classified as dry lands were converted into wet lands. For conversion to wet lands the farmers had to invest a lot of their earning and borrow money to sink bore wells. The farmers say in this village, many bore wells failed compared to that of the functioning. With the ever decreasing sizes of farm land it is difficult to invest anymore in improving the land.

With the increasing demand for land for non-agricultural use growing in the village as the town started to expand rapidly, the small holding farmers were the first once to part away the land. Most of the OBC households sold their land in the early, but the big land owners waited the prices to grow. The Gouds who had considerable land sold the land. Gurati Kapus are still holding on to their lands and cultivating but also planning to sell off the land and buy new lands in other villages once the prices are high. During my stay in the field, only Gurati Kapus and Mala and Madiga caste groups were cultivating their land as around their farms were getting converted for non-agricultural purposes.

Credit-Debt relations are now predominantly noted outside the agriculture. There are many small money lenders who give loans for migrating to Dubai, for establishing petty business like retail stores, mechanic and repair shops, and for buying auto rickshaws.

4.3 Beedi Industry

The emergence of the beedi industry as a major employer is historically related to the destruction of weaving as a primary profession in the village. The history of the displacement of manual weaving by the development of superior technology, in this case the power-loom, charted a similar course to the displacement of manual textile workers at the advent of the power-loom in the classical centers of the Industrial revolution that was captured so powerfully and eloquently by Marx and Engels in the 19th century.

The 1929 report of the survey conducted by S Keshava Iyengar mentioned weavers migrating to Bombay to work in textile mills.

The 1949 survey report contained the first signs of a genuine shift as it mentioned the cross-over of professions: earlier, the demography of the village used to be organized on

the basis of caste professions, with each community more or less adhering to its area of work. So it was even in 1929, when in Kotha Armur cultivators worked the field and weavers worked on their handlooms. Not a single weaver owned land or cultivated as a tenant or even as an agricultural labourer. They were engaged in the household activity of weaving, to which the entire family used to be devoted in the manner which reminds one of Chayanov's peasant economy. But in 1949, almost all weavers had shifted to agriculture as a subsidiary means of income and cultivators had likewise entered weaving for an additional source of income. This is indicative both of the requirement for more money as well the rising demand for cloth. Both are, in turn, indicative of the greater presence of money in the economy.

Beedi industries originally flourished in Maharashtra and Gujarat and these became destinations for migrant labourers from the northern Telangana region. The demand for beedi being high, labour requirements were high and provided an additional source of income for families moving to Maharashtra and Gujarat to work in textile mills. As Srinivasulu writes, "The early migrants to western India used to be usually accompanied by their families; while the men worked on the mills and power looms, the women made beedies." (Srinivasulu, 1997) However, facing threat of increasing politicization and tendency towards unionization by beedi workers, the industry shifted decisively to the northern Telangana region, and became particularly well-established in the Nizamabad district. It has remained an informal home-based industry (where production of the commodity takes place at home) dominated by women workers.

The beedi industry is a primary industry in 4 districts of Telangana: Adilabad, Karimnagar, Medak and Nizamabad. In terms of employment and output, the industry is

biggest in Nizamabad. According to an editorial article Labooour-Beedu-Workers of Nizamabad published in Economic and Political Weekly in 1981, 1.5 lakh employees of the beedi industry were from Nizamabad out of a total of 4 lakh beedi workers in the 4 major districts put together, producing almost half of all the beedis produced in these districts. 95% of the employees were women and 97% of them were illiterate (EPW, 1981).

Table 4.18: Participation of Males and Females in Beedi Industry across Different Caste Groups:

Caste Gender	Males	Females
SC	0 (0)	18 (5.14)
OBC	54 (100)	330 (94.28)
OC	0 (0)	2 (0.57)
Total	54 (100)	350 (100)

Source: Field data by researcher

Table 4.19: Gender-wise comparison of participation in Beedi Industry:

Gender Caste	SC	OBC	OC
Males	0	54 (14.06)	0
Females	18 (100)	330 (85.93)	2 (100)
Total	18 (100)	384 (100)	2 (100)

*Percentage in parentheses

Source: Field data by researcher

As can be seen from the table, upper caste women do not work in the beedi industry (only 2 women from OCs). It is considered as low status work. On the other hand, SC households engaged in cultivation and agricultural labour, also engage in beedi rolling when there is no agricultural work. For some women, it is regular employment, while women from cultivating households, especially SCs, view it as an additional source of income.

Women working in the beedi industry allow male members of a household to look for better work opportunities, one of which is to migrate to distant places or abroad to earn more money.

Following is the complete transcript of an interview with Sulochana, an aged woman living in Kotha Armur:

“I have been rolling beedis for 30-40 years. The wage was Rs. 13 per 1000 beedis when I started rolling beedis. But I remember rolling beedis when the wage was Rs. 7 or 8 per 1000 beedis. I was rolling beedis since childhood. My mother didn't roll beedi, I learnt beedi rolling from my aunt (mother's sister). My mother used to go for daily wage. My parents had half acre land. And my father used to work as attached labor and used to work with S Reddy. Our caste is Mala. I was married at very young age. He was 3 and I was 2 years old when we got married. When I was 15 years old only, I came to stay with my husband. I stayed with my mother after my marriage and used to visit my husband's place for 2 to 3 days every now and then.

After me and my husband came to know each other well, I started staying permanently with my husband.

First I had a daughter and she died at 5 and next I had a son who died immediately after birth. Next, I gave birth to another child. Now I have only one son. He finished his degree and now he is not working but waiting for getting into Government job. My husband is into agriculture when we have 2 and half acres we cultivate Jonna, Maize and Soya, turmeric on our farm. Till now we dug 4 bore wells. Recently, after selling Soya produce, with that money we dug another bore well upto 500 feet. The first bore well costed us Rs.15, 000, second bore well, it costed us Rs.10, 000 and third bore well with the help of government scheme. All four bore wells got failed. We use water for irrigation from our dug well. My husband works on our own farm and he was never an attached labor. We are always in agriculture working on our own lands and didn't migrate like others. I only work on our own farm especially when we employ other labor. Rest of the time, I only make beedis. I am lucky because unlike other households where the husbands leave farms to be looked after by their women and they only involve during decision making.

In the beginning, they didn't give me beedi provident fund card. I only got pension after two months when my issue was brought to the notice of the officials. Pension fund is not regularly paid. We have to make many rounds to the officials for the pensions.

My son is totally depending on us. He is only interested in getting government jobs and he is waiting for exams to get into government jobs and he is 27 years old. And, he doesn't want get married unless he gets job. I asked him to marry but he always replies how I can marry without a job. He says you yourself always concerned about my job and livelihood and think about how my wife would be (concerned about my job). Till class 10th, he studied in ZPHS and inter and degree at Armuru government colleges. I didn't spend any money on my son's education towards fee. But I just spent on his every day

requirements. Since 5 years, my son is not doing anything. He just goes out and comes back. I am afraid to pressurize him to take up any work. Because he may do something to himself (suicide).

When we go for finding a bride for my son, we do ask if she can roll beedis. It's always nice if my daughter in law is into beedi rolling. The young girls are not into beedi rolling anymore and they don't like this work. It is seen as a low and degrading job. Few years back if girl is into beedi rolling and she can roll more beedis in a day that would be an added attraction to go for that match.

I used to roll 1000 to 1200 beedis per day. Though now wages are around Rs.170-180, we dont make any savings. A person can make 1500 beedis if she is efficient at rolling beedis. And some people make 200 beedis an hour. That doesn't mean that they can make 2000 beedis in 10 hours because the neck and hands would strain after some time. So we need to take breaks. Some of my friends were affected (diseases) due to this kind of work. Because I always take a break and work in our won farm that helped me. Pension scheme is very good and I am very happy to get pension money.

My two brothers (out of three) went to Dubai and now they are better off. Whenever there is some issue at their house, I visit their family. Now those two brothers built very good houses in their village. My third brother is MDO.

Now nobody is looking whether the boy is good or bad. Their only concern whether he is job holder or not. Nobody thinks that would be the good match if the boy is doing Vyavasayam (agriculture). Because, the girl's family does think that the girl also will be put into agriculture work.

My earnings from beedi rolling has contributed to some extent in our four bore wells because of chittis.”

4.4 Dubai migration

A number of steps precede the actual act of making the journey. A work permit has to be arranged and a host of formalities have to be completed, for which, invariably, an agent has to be contacted. Each of these steps requires some expenditure and the agent has also to be paid. In addition to this, persons with some information or knowledge about the labour and job market have to be found and contacted for advice and recommendation. One cannot overlook the great uncertainty involved in the whole venture. This can be instantiated with the help of personal experiences of many aspirant migrants. In such a scenario, it is no surprise that kin networks develop in the migration scenario. Such kin networks are invaluable for aspirants as it provides a sense of security that would otherwise be missing in a foreign and alien place. It also increases access to certain job markets and to reliable information. The strengthening of such kin networks is, therefore, very much related to the growth of migratory tendencies in certain caste groups or sections of society.

In certain cases, a kin network proves to be the difference between finding a bad job and a good job.

Table 4.20: Migrants to West Asia

Caste	Number of Males (presently working in Dubai)	Percentage representation
SC	17	20.23
OBC	65	77.38
Others	2	2.38
Total	84	100

Source: Field data by researcher

Among OBCs, 45 households whose male members have migrated are from Devanga caste group. Out of these 45, women from 33 households are engaged in beedi rolling. Out of the remaining 12 households, in 10 of them the men who migrated are not married. In the remaining two, the wives work as a cook and a tailor respectively.

None of the women from this village migrated to Dubai. The women from these households are engaged different works available in village.

Out of the 17 SC households from which men have migrated, women from 11 households cultivate their own fields, and out of these 11 women cultivators, 5 of them are also engaged in beedi rolling. Women from 3 households work as agricultural labourers.

Among other 20 households from OBC caste groups, 2 women are Aganwadi teachers, 2 women members are tailors, 14 beedi rollers and out of these 14 beedi rollers, 1 woman is also engaged in agriculture. Rest of the 2 women members from these households are tailors.

Males from 2 Munnuru Kapus, 3 Mera, 2 Chakali, 2 Padmashali, 4 Poosala and 5 Gouds households have migrated to Dubai apart from 45 Devangas.

Of the upper castes, only 2 male members from Gurati Kapu households have migrated to Dubai for wage work. The women member from these 2 Gurati Kapu households are engaged in agriculture, one working as cultivating owners and the other being an agricultural labor. Both the households belong to Gurati Kapu caste group. Gurati Kapus are a rich caste group whose primary occupation in this village is agriculture. However, Gurati Kapus from other villages in the region are known to be migrating.

None of the Reddy men migrate to Dubai. Villagers go to Dubai for wage work.

Table 4.21: Dubai Returnees and Present Occupation:

Caste	Cultivator	Agricultural Labor	Beedi Industry	Non-Farm Labor	Self-Employed	Salaried Employment	Traditional Occupation	Total
SC	4	2	0	0	0	0	0	6
OBC	4	0	7	2	21	1	2	37
Others	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total	9	2	7	2	21	1	2	44

Source: Field data by researcher

There are 44 men in the village who once worked in Dubai. 7 men out of these 44 are engaged in cultivation, 2 are agricultural labor. All the SC men who have returned have returned to agriculture and did not engage in other occupations. The men engaged in agriculture bought land for cultivation purpose.

Most of the OBC men who have returned have taken up self-employment. They have set up various shops such as, chicken center, bakery, TV and motor-bike repair shops, tailors, bore-well pump mechanics.

Shivanna who belongs to Madiga caste owns two acres of land in a village near Kotha Armur, he bought the land after he came back working in Dubai and cultivates turmeric and jowar there. He went to Dubai for the first time in 1998 and worked 12 years as construction labourer, coming to village twice in between, working for only one company throughout. His cousin was already in Dubai and helped him arrange for visa and also with the job. Shivanna had the huge advantage of knowing where he would be working before leaving.

Working in Dubai proved helpful for Shivanna and also his cousin, but it is not the same with every migrant. According to him, most people go there and then have to find work, making them very desperate and more prone to choosing the wrong employer to work with. A great number of employees hold back wages, do not pay on time and use many coercive strategies to render the labourers helpless and obliging.

Lakshman belonging to Munnuru Kapu (OBC) caste group is an aged man who went to two Gulf countries to work as a casual labourer. Before he went for the first time, his family was in an extremely precarious economic situation. His mother, his wife and he could find work only as agricultural laborers with meagre wages though they had some 4 acres of land it was not profitable to engage in cultivation, he piled up debts. This compelled him to search for better wage work.

Lakshman made the decision to go to the Gulf in 1980. The land his family owned was sold to finance his migration. In order to secure his work permit and other papers necessary, he contacted an agent in Bombay and paid him Rs.16, 000. The agent cheated him. For the next two years, Lakshman kept traveling to Mumbai to find another opportunity. Another agent, a Telugu man, cheated him along with 40 other people from

Nizamabad and surrounding regions and ran away after taking Rs 40000 and passports from each one.

When he eventually received his passport through an agent, he approached another agent for visa. For one whole year he kept visiting this agent's office before receiving his visa and work permit in 1983. He was to travel from Nizamabad to Bombay, and from there to Saudi Arabia. The day he took a train to Bombay, Laksham remembers there was a huge political public meeting to be addressed by NT Rama Rao, the Telugu Desam Party founder at Nizamabad town.

Lakshman's first stay at Saudi Arabia lasted two and half years. He worked as a casual labourer in a palm farm, he was employed to pluck palm dates. He also worked as a carpenter, and a garage cleaner and attendant. After two years, he returned home for three months and went back to Saudi, this time via Dhahran²¹. But he ran into severe difficulties. He was stopped at the Dhahran airport from taking a flight to Saudi and was told that the visa given to him by the Saudi embassy was not valid. He was neither allowed to go out of the airport nor to make any phone calls. He reports that he was not the only one detained, but there were others like him at the airport.

He remained at the Dhahran airport three days, befriending several Indians during that time. An Indian from Kerala, who worked at the airport helped him get a return ticket booked him that would take him back to Bombay. He returned penny less to Bombay and his passport was seized by airport authorities on condition it would be returned to him only if he paid the return ticket fare. As he could not gather the money, he left it there at

²¹ A city in Saudi Arabia.

the airport and never got it back. With the help of an acquaintance in Bombay was he able to book a train ticket to return home to Nizamabad.

Later on, he got a new passport and tried to get visa and work permit to return to the Gulf. But it would take 6 years for him to be successful. For 6 years, he kept traveling up and down from village and Bombay for the visa.. When he eventually got the visa, it cost him Rs. 70000, and in addition to this had incurred a lot of expenses traveling to and from Bombay.

When he went back to Saudi a second time, he stayed there for 6 years continuously and cleared off all his debts. After that he wanted to come back to India. But since his visa had expired, he was stopped and detained at the airport. He was able to get back to India only with an amnesty. All this happened when the Gulf was politically volatile due to the Kuwait war.

When he was in Saudi Arabia, his wife worked as an agricultural labourer and also took on beedi rolling.

After returning to India, he remained in India for 5 years and did only agriculture work on his own farm, which is dry land. Then he went to Bahrain, staying there for 2 years. By the time he went to Bahrain, his children had grown up. They were 18 at the time he left.

While working in Bahrain, he did not get a full year's wages, and had to leave the company to work on daily wage basis. At the end of two years, in order to extend his visa at the end of this period, he had to pay about Rs. one lakh. In Bahrain, he made arrangements for his sons to find work and visa in the Gulf (Bahrain and Saudi).

Since returning from Bahrain, he bought back his own land which he had had to sell to go to Saudi Arabia the first time. He settled in the village and now works on his own field, and also as toddy-tapper. He cultivates turmeric, paddy and Jowar. Jowar has begun to be cultivated in Kotha Armur only recently because it is a seed crop and provides good returns.

Notwithstanding the harsh living and working conditions awaiting migrant labourers in Gulf countries, evidence has been growing to support the assertion that “migration can result in positive changes at migrants’ places of origin by raising incomes, preventing the descent into poverty, and facilitating the improvement in human capital.” (Sunam & McCarthy, 2016: 39) Thus, there is a strong economic rationality behind a choice which involves an obvious element of uncertainty. The impetus to migrate and take up work as casual labourers in the Middle Eastern and Gulf countries has to be considered within the context of agrarian distress the reasons for which are structural, including the steady decline of income from agriculture.

The role of migrant earnings and remittance has begun to interest scholars as there seems to be real consequences of the money coming for the regions of migrants’ origins. The same was identified and highlighted by The World Bank in a 2007 report where migration was attributed as a principle factor facilitating wealth creation for poor families and their flight from poverty.

A case from Kotha Armur presents the complexities involved.

Babu is from the Devanga caste group. His grandfather was a handloom worker but his father did not work on the loom, instead starting a tea shop in the village. A growing up

Babu found the family struggling economically. The house the family stayed in was rented. There was no own home even at the time Babu was interviewed. Several attempts at applying for government housing scheme did not result in any positive outcome.

Before going to Qatar, Babu had worked in his father's small eatery and tea stall and was also employed as a truck driver transporting cement bags. He ran the eatery for fifteen years. This hindered his studies and he could study only up to intermediate level. "I paid back my Rs. 2 lakh in Dubai after I got my driving license." Driving as occupation he says pays better wages.

Babu went to Qatar, where his brother-in-law was working at the time. He paid 14, 000 riyals (Rs. 2, 00,000) to get his visa and work permit with the help of his brother-in-law. He first worked as a daily wage laborer laying electricity cables, and after some time, could get a driving license, for which he spent Rs. 1 lakh. Once he received his license, he was employed as a driver for last three years.

Babu had to return to India due to a family emergency and came back without savings and debts still to pay back without having reasonable means to do so, since wages at the village are low.

His daughter approaching marriageable age, it was a persistent worry for him to gather up the finances to meet the expenses of his daughter's marriage. All these reasons, he said, came together to convince him to go back to the Gulf again. He arranged for a visa and his brother-in-law fixed him a job as a driver.

In Qatar, Babu lived in a labour camp. A labour camp is typically a building with many rooms designed to accommodate as many residents as possible.

Some people come back from the Gulf with no savings or pending debts, and they realize that the pay back home is too low and find it hard to adjust to working conditions and therefore decide to go back. Large amounts of money are paid to agents for the promise of good salaried jobs. Agents usually promise higher salaries though migrant labourers realize upon reaching there that the wages may be as low as half of what was promised. But in such a situation the labourer is helpless to do anything even if he has been obviously cheated. If they don't like this then they work for few months and earn money to buy a ticket back to India. This way many people come back. People who are already in physical/hard work here in India can only sustain in Dubai working conditions.

The wealth thus acquired and brought back to the place of origin can become an important factor in developments in the place of origin.

The case of Rajkumar has been cited to illustrate this.

Rajkumar is from the Devanga caste group and has a franchise of installing cable TV network in Kotha Armur. He studied up to 10th class and did not want to pursue studies further. He migrated to Bombay where he did some infrequent odd jobs and later decided to go to Bahrain. From there, he went to Dubai to work as a housekeeper in a hotel. He paid Rs.70, 000 to an agent to get this job. He remained in Dubai for 6 years and returned to Kotha Armur, married and had two daughters. In 2009, he went to Afghanistan and worked in a US army base as a housekeeper. He related that his application was selected probably because he had prior experience of housekeeping and a pleasing personality. The working conditions in the army were nicer than any other he experienced in his life, and pay was prompt and high. He also participated in drills and was trained, like all staff in an army base are, to take cover in bunkers in case of an attack. One of his brothers has

been living and working in Bahrain for 7 years, and another brother runs a chicken shop in the village. There were three other people from Kotha Armur who worked in a similar capacity in Afghanistan, and he says many others were from Nepal, Philippines and Bangladesh.

With the money he received from working in Bahrain and then especially in Afghanistan, he was able to return to his place of origin and start a business. Whereas he and majority of males in his family could only work as agricultural labourers before Rajkumar left for Bahrain, his family had better options to work.

This can be read in the context of the erosion of clear urban-rural boundaries and the emergence of what has been termed 'rurban'. Remittance money can and does take the shape of capital investments, and can therefore count as substantial gains for the families involved.

On the other hand, however, there is the undeniable critique against the incorporation of precarious workers into a world order sustained through the movement or migration of dispossessed populations which provide cheap labour power for the further development of metropolitan centres.

How migrant labourers' families react to migration of male members

The migrant labourer alone does not face adverse situations and economic uncertainty. His family is just as vulnerable and dependent on the remittances he sends. It is important to look at the response of families when a male member migrates.

Leela Gulati (1987) examined the socio-economic impact of male migration on families with reference to two themes of dependence and coping mechanisms of the family. (Gulati, 1987: WS-41)

A common observation about all families observed by her is that a male migration had a major impact on the families concerned due to which each of the families had to make major adjustments.

Since the decision to migrate is provoked by difficult economic circumstances, and migrating to a foreign country requires capital to make the necessary arrangements, an economic impact is felt right from the moment the decision to migrate is taken: “He has to mobilise various social networks both at home and abroad and this he does with the support and involvement of the adult members, men and women, of his immediate family, including not only his wife and parents but also siblings, as well as other relatives, friends and neighbours.” (ibid)

To assist the aspiring migrant, assets such as jewelry is mortgaged and money received as dowry is expended. Much of the evidence from studies of such families also suggests that women in these households take up some form of work in the absence of the male who migrated. In Kotha Armur, almost all the women from households where a male has migrated to Dubai are engaged in some form work, predominantly as beedi rollers.

At the time Laxman – whose case has been related above - was interviewed, one of his sons was in Saudi and the other was in Bahrain. Both were married, and the elder son had a kid who remained at the village to be raised by his grandparents. The elder son was working in a municipality in Saudi Arabia and the younger son was working as a cleaner in a cab company office in Bahrain. His third son lives in Kotha Armur and has taken up agriculture. All his daughters-in-law take work of rolling beedis, but they do not work as agricultural labourers.

This highlights the decline of agriculture as a preference for even wage work. John Harriss, J Jeyaranjan and K Nagaraj (2012) discussed economic and social change in a village in southern Tamil Nadu, Gangaikondan, in terms of the ‘dispersed urbanization’ characteristic not just of Tamil Nadu, India’s highest urbanized state in terms of urban population, but also of many other parts of India. Agriculture has been facing shortage of labour because more and more people from the rural working classes are preferring to work in the non-farm sector where the wages are comparatively higher than in agriculture. Much like the Devanga caste in Kotha Armur, members of which specialized in migrating to the Gulf and Dubai for various kinds of casual and salaried work.

Land market

There is increased demand for land in and around Armur town. People buying land in this village are farmers in interior villages who want to own property in this village, which is expected to become a part of Armur town in the near future. Farmers buying property not just want to buy land to hold it as an asset but also for residential purposes. As the town expands, residential property owners can effectively become rent seekers. Rich farmers in the region view this as an opportunity to diversify their income by investing in land in Kotha Armur.

Speculators are also active in the land market. They buy land to hold it and wait for prices to go higher.

Returning migrants form another group which is buying land. There are a huge number of returning migrants who have made money working in West Asia and are seeking for avenues of investment. Kotha Armur provides a good opportunity for their investment.

Many people living in this village own land in other villages. Kotha Armur has a dynamic land market and most of the land is being taken for commercial use, especially along and around the highways. There is a lot of speculation on land, especially around the new railway station which was being constructed at the time when the fieldwork was conducted. This represents a new opportunity to villagers for upward mobility and many villagers are engaged in getting good land deals. At the end of my fieldwork in 2011, agricultural land was still intact but it was imminent that agricultural land would be transferred for commercial use. Crops were still standing, but land prices for commercial purposes were high and farmers were being approached by speculators interested in investing in land for commercial use.

To conclude, the agrarian landholding structure has undergone a tremendous change in this village due to its proximity to town, land reforms and demographic changes resulting in small and marginal farms, Commercialization of agricultural land, coupled with agricultural losses owing to increased input cost and reduced output has pushed many into diversification of occupations. Occupational diversity is marked by plurality of vocations comprised of farm and non-farm, Temporary and multiple service sector occupations, migration as casual labor to urban and international locales. Converting agricultural into commercial land, many with relatively sizable lands have optimized this entrepreneurial opportunity, by selling their lands and reinvesting in agricultural lands in interior areas, thus benefiting from the process of peri-urbanization. While this has opened up doors for some, those with small and marginal land holdings have had to either opt out of agriculture to join the ranks of rural service sector, and or migrate to the Gulf nations as casual laborers. Though precarious, the remunerative nature of casual work in

what was commonly referred to as “Dubai,” was pursued by many, even though it was fraught with challenges.

Spatial-relational nature of agrarian transformations operated in and through the caste, class and gender relations. Hierarchical Social relations that once tied up caste-land ownership have undergone significant transformation. Since agriculture is not the dominant sector of employment in this village, the social relations have considerably changed, and as a result, the landowning dominant caste has lost their authority and control over other caste groups. Importantly, gender formed a constitutive element of agrarian change through the Beedi industry. Women who were once the backbone of agriculture, have largely withdrawn from agriculture in favor of beedi industry. As an informal home-based industry, it attracts women workers in large scale; leaving a big labour vacuum in the farming sector. Secondly, women working in the beedi industry facilitated men from the household to look for better work opportunities, one of which is to migrate to abroad to earn better wage, thus adding to the labour vacuum.

Thus the picture of agrarian change that emerges from this village is multivalent as emergent realities of labour, land, caste, class and gender interact to produce intended and unintended consequences. What we find in Kotha Armur is a much complex narrative which is grounded in multiple temporalities, spatialities and factors that are both intrinsic and extrinsic. The agrarian transition today as this chapter suggests is complex, and needs to be understood through new conceptual tools that move beyond the traditional sociological methods of village studies to account for porous boundaries and realities.

Chapter V

Conclusion

Recent scholarship in social science has paid a lot of attention to a geo-spatial phenomenon that is being termed 'rurban' (Gupta, 2015) or rural urbanism (Harris et al, 2012). The most visible marker of this phenomenon is the erosion of the definite geographical boundary between village and town, and an inter-mingling of physical characteristics of both. Traditionally villages were considered as separate, isolated settlements, which had a distinct favour of the *rural*: settled households, mainly agricultural and agriculture-related work, and a simpler and relatively less diversified economic system in comparison with cities. However, this distinctness of the rural is no longer the case for Kotha Armur (as in many other villages in India).

The logic of urban growth and development seems to be spilling over and including villages into its ambit, modifying and reconstituting them to a much greater extent in the image of cities. This process is captured in the changes in rural economy: the structural decline of agriculture in terms of the percentage of people it employs and its declining economic significance as borne out by its decreasing share in the GDP as well as the rural national domestic product.

An important factor for this development is the decline of agriculture, historically the backbone of rural economy. According to Agricultural Census 2015, agricultural land under small and marginal farms now accounts for about 86% of total landholdings. This implied that the marginal and small landholders or the landholding households cannot solely depend on agriculture as the primary occupation.

Another important factor is democratic change and the disappearance of landlord. Now the 'direct' forms of dominance is replaced by 'mediated' dominance. Whereas earlier the land was possessed by landlords both for cultivating and non-cultivating purposes, the situation today is a predominance of small, family farms with limited expenditure capacity except in the peak harvest season. The steadily declining returns from agriculture may also have contributed or coerced big landowners to diversify their sources of income and gradually move out of agriculture. As Dipankar Gupta notes, “By now agriculturists are ready to accept that their future lies elsewhere, perhaps in cities and towns, perhaps also in household and informal industries. If they cannot make it to those places, at least their children should. Thus, while cultivators, in general, constitute about 44.0% of the rural population, this number rises to 63.6% if we take only those among them who are 60 years of age” (Gupta, 2015).

In the four or even five decades following Independence, non-farm employment was at best a subsidiary occupation held by some people in the village. However, in the recent past Agricultural sector has been experiencing a deceleration in both income share and employment, whereas the rural non-farm economy experienced rapid growth. This has led some commentators to observe that, “the effect of the slowdown in agriculture on rural economy was offset by significantly higher growth in non-farm sectors which accelerated growth rate in the rural economy to above 5% as compared to 3.72% during the pre-reforms period.”(Chand Ramesh et al, 2017:66).

As a correlative to these factors and accelerating them, the growth of the rural non-farm sector has influenced this process of rural ‘urbanism’ a great deal. The service sector has emerged as a major employer and contributor to net rural output. The magnitude of

wholesale and retail trade, hotels, restaurants, transportation, financial services etc. is growing in rural areas (Chand Ramesh, et al, 2017). Rural non-farm jobs like auto drivers, sales persons, mechanic jobs, retail stores, watch-man jobs, etc., also increased.

“The declining contribution of rural areas in national output without a commensurate reduction in its share in employment implies that a major portion of the overall economic growth in the country came from the capital intensive sectors in urban areas without generating significant employment.”(ibid: 65). Commenting on this process, Thomas Piketty (2014) says that capitalism is able to restructure itself from time to time more imaginatively and therefore if working class labour in the manufacturing sector is converted into informal, unorganized labour whether in rural or urban, it is just that capital is able to create more efficient and cheap profit making methods or processes. It does not matter for capital which segment is affected and how.

Classes of labour

The present study critically engages with Bernstein’s thesis of classes of rural labour, particularly the implications of shift from farm to non-farm and diversification for different castes and classes in the study village. The study findings indicate that caste and class (land) have a bearing on occupational mobility away from agriculture, specifically with the kind of occupations they entered in Kotha Arumur. A few key findings from the study are provided below:

1. Devangas, the weaver castes were always in search of jobs, since the advent of power looms and the spread of mill made cloth. The members from this caste group migrated to distant places like Bombay earlier but now to West Asia since

1980s. In brief, one can say that they continue to be *footloose labour* to use Jan Breman's (1996) concept. Today Devanga caste men engage themselves in multiple occupations while the women work in beedi industry within the village. Over a period of time, Devangas have learnt to change their jobs frequently and engage themselves in multiple jobs.

2. Gurati Kapus among the upper castes and Mala and Madiga among the Dalits are primarily engaged in agriculture.

- 2.1. While Gurati Kapus always possessed land, they were also able to buy more land from Reddys, and from other castes who diversified their occupations outside the village and urban centres.

- 2.2. A few Mala and Madiga caste households invested in buying the agricultural land through their savings from Gulf migration and hence continue with agriculture today.

- 2.3. Discussion with the Dalit respondents indicated that they could only buy agricultural land with their savings as they could not imagine themselves to do either business or any other enterprising activity outside the village.

- 2.4. All the other landowning castes in the village are marginal farmers who cannot support themselves with the income derived from agriculture alone. As a result, all the landowning castes except Gurati Kapus depend on agriculture and non-farm activities simultaneously.

This clearly indicates that the upper castes and OBCs have certain social capital (to use Bourdieu's concept) in providing access to the market mechanism, while it is a closed space for Dalits.

3. The dominant caste Reddys have moved away from agriculture into urban spaces in the past two decades. The diversification of Reddys can be seen in three different ways:
 - 3.1. Quite a few of them entered into salaried jobs both government and private sector.
 - 3.2. A large number of them were able to set up their own business such as medical shops, liquor shops, dairy farm, seed agents, rent seeking activities taking advantage of the new enterprises in the nearest urban centre Armur.
 - 3.3. A few emigrated to USA, Canada, UK and other European countries in the professional jobs.
4. Those caste groups who are engaged in traditional occupations such as hair-cutting, fishing, toddy-tapping and washing clothes still continue to do these jobs but they have adopted themselves extremely well to suit the present day needs to generate higher economic incentives.
5. There is a gender basis to the non-farm work done in Kotha Armur. While self-employment and other odd jobs are held overwhelmingly by men, women entered into the work of beedi industry. The beedi industry is quite large in Nizamabad district and women constitute 95% of its employee base. Till 1980s it used to be factory-based work, since then it has largely become home-based work, which gives an additional incentive for women to work as beedi rollers.

From the above points, one can analyse certain major trends from this diversification process across caste groups:

One, there has been a twin movement away from agriculture: the landowning classes have diversified and entered into high productivity sectors using their monetary and political reach. The lower classes and caste groups on the other hand entered into low-paying non-farm activities both in rural and urban areas.

Second, women are largely confined to the beedi industry. Surprisingly, are not involved in any self-employment activities like men and also do not migrate to distant places. Out of 475 working women, a large majority i.e. 81% of them are engaged in non-farm work. Of these 475, about 74% of them are engaged in Beedi industry, the largest sector which absorbs women workers. It is interesting to note the gender distinction here: men from all castes are engaged in self-employment both in and outside the village, while women are engaged only in beedi industry, agricultural and other domestic activities in the village.

Third, the conceptual terminology used in explaining agrarian relations need to be critically scrutinized. For instance, agrarian studies literature constantly invokes terms such as ‘dominant’ caste, ‘landlord’, ‘tenant’ and ‘landless agricultural labourer’ as pure categories which can explain the agrarian relations. However, the recent developments in the rural - the most important of which can be summarized as the diversification of rural occupations bring to the fore the complexity or hybridity of these categories. This is repeatedly captured in macro surveys²², or the steady fragmentation of farm sizes all over India (Agricultural Census, 2011) accompanied by a general disappearance of landlords owning large amounts of land. Therefore, one can argue that the existing categories fall short of capturing what is happening in rural India today.

²²See, for instance, Rural Development Network. 2013. India Rural Development Report 2012|13. Delhi: Orient BlackSwan.

Fourth, the village chosen for the study, Kotha Armur, was a totally isolated village even at the beginning of the 1960s, subsequently, this village was chosen by the Census Monograph series primarily because it represented an isolated and non-urbanised village. However, by the last phase of the decade of the 2000s, during which time I carried out my fieldwork, this village represented non-agrarian, urban characteristics, which is spatially closer to Armur town. In a sense, Kotha Armur was caught up in an irreversible process of integration with the nearby town, Armur. This tendency has been heightened with the well-developed transport system (bus stand and a railway station within the boundaries of the village) and land commodification.

All this has set off a new phase of commodification of land in which agricultural land is being turned into commercial land. Real estate prices are now applicable on agricultural land and prices of land have shot up. There is a constant flow of speculators, contractors and prospective buyers to Kotha Armur. Farmers in the village who have substantial amounts of land have welcomed this process as a new opportunity to capitalize. This was clear from the interactions I had with farmers, who were prepared to sell their land and buy land in other villages in the region where land prices were low.

In fact, different classes of rural labour across the castes have been consistently migrating to the nearest urban centres as much as to west Asia to reproduce themselves.

It is also important to distinguish between migrants who are poor and migrants from well-to-do backgrounds. This is borne out from the evidence in Kotha Armur. While members from all other caste groups migrate in the capacity of unskilled or semi-skilled labourers, members from Reddy households in all except one case migrated with professional jobs or for education.

The migration for work has resulted in improving the economic standing of the many SC and OBC households.

Members from a number of OBC groups who migrate to West Asia to work as migrant labourers invest in petty business (self-employment) in the town and the village.

The SC caste groups who were engaged in agriculture mostly as agricultural labourers earlier, preferred to cultivate their own land now. Many members from these groups who migrated to Dubai came back, bought agricultural land and started cultivating on their own land.

The impetus to migrate is *precarity* in an overwhelming majority of the cases. In interviews I had with several migrant returnees or family members of migrants currently in West Asia, I was told that agricultural labour or casual odd jobs formed the only sources of income for many of these households, and this led to the decision to migrate and work in a foreign country where working conditions may be harsh but the pay is incomparably better.

Remittance and money earned from West Asia constituted an important factor in the growth of the town. Many migrants and migrant returnees in this region are investing in land since it is perceived as an asset. Households from which members migrated did experience a rise in income which becomes a distinguishing factor in the emerging class differentiation in agrarian society.

While the Reddy caste group, which used to be the major landowning caste group in this village, has progressively moved out of agriculture into other sectors of the economy.

Younger generations of most Reddy households have migrated to different parts of India and abroad for jobs, business and education.

While scholars discuss the general significance of rural non-farm activity, it must be noted that there is stratification in the non-farm sector with regard to the kinds of work available. Apart from education levels, competence and skills, etc. intersection of caste, class (land) and gender determine this process of class differentiation under the present emerging conditions in agrarian society.

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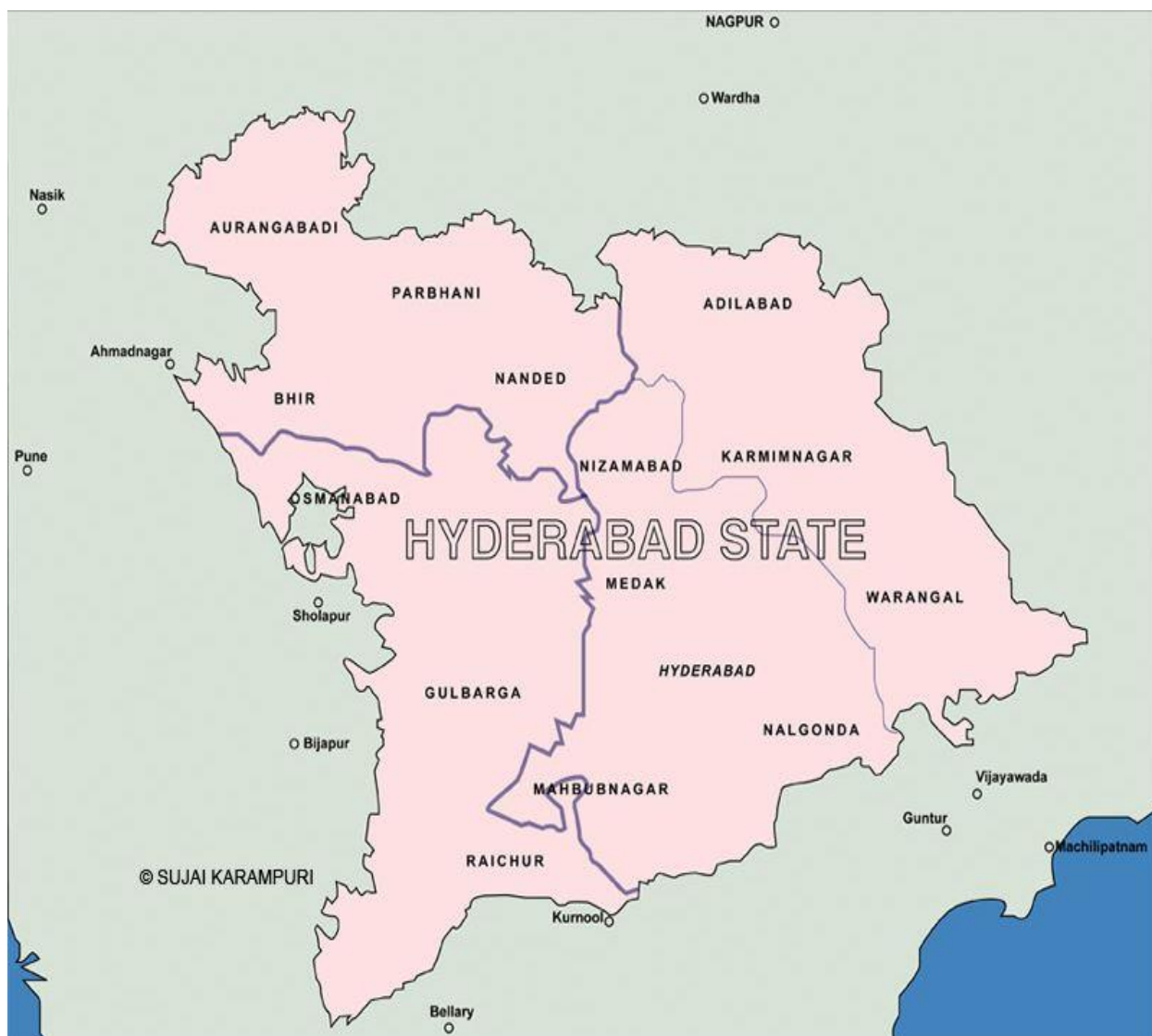
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Appendix I: Maps

Hyderabad State



Andhra Pradesh State (1956-2014)



Telangana State Map

Telangana State Map



VILLAGE KOTHARMUR

Armoor Taluqa.

Kotharmur is a village on the road from Dichpalle to Adilabad, nearly 24 miles from Nizamabad by the recently repaired road running direct to Armoor, and 29 miles *via* Dichpalle.

Armoor is a place famous for silk weaving: numerous kinds of silk sarrees with embroidery work are woven, and scores of merchants make their fortunes by acting as sow-cars and salesmen for the weavers. Kotharmur being nearby, several of the families do weaving work: ordinary cotton sarrees and kans worn daily by the raiyat classes are woven. But it is significant that no land holder (except one) weaves and no weaver is either an agricultural tenant or an occupant.

The number of inhabited houses is 64.

2. There are 32 land holders. In 5 cases, sikmidari divisions (if a person shares in a smaller or larger degree, occupancy rights with a pattadar, then that person is called a sikmidar) were overlooked as the divisions were all among brothers who lived together, ate from the same granary and kitchen and carried on agricultural operations on a full joint family basis. The holdings are in all in 174 bits. The sizes of the average dry, wet and garden holdings are—

	acres 718-10	
dry land	.. $\frac{24}{77-0}$	= 29-37 nearly.
	acres 77-0	
wet land	.. $\frac{21}{1-14}$	= 3-26 nearly.
	acres 1-14	
garden land	.. $\frac{1}{1-14}$	= 1-14.
	1	

The holdings vary in size between—

	dry	wet	garden
biggest holding ..	216-29	13-37	1-14
smallest holding ..	0-2	0-10	

5 owners do not cultivate, 2 being village officers, 1 deshmukh, 1 trader and 1 coolie. 9 of the 27 cultivating

owners have other occupations in addition : 6 are village officers, 1 is a weaver, 1 is a trader and 1 a barber.

The land classified as double-cropped area is 11-19 acres, but all the wet land is lying fallow on account of want of rain. Certain wet lands are assessable for abi crops only, certain others for thabi crops only, and some lands for both. In many cases of late, holders of the 1st and the 2nd classes of land do not cultivate in the season for the crop of which they are not assessed—even though water and other facilities may be available to do so. And if in the other season (as is now-a-days frequently the case) the crop fails, the occupant is anxious to get remission : he does not realise the loss he sustains by letting go the opportunity to get a crop simply with a view to avoid the possibility of additional assessment as on double-cropped area.

3. No land holder has taken up other lands than his own for cultivation. Landless tenants number 11, and the sizes of the average tenant farms are—

	acres 202-17	
dry land	.. —————	= 22-20 nearly.
	9	
	acres 2-10	
wet land	.. —————	= 1-5.
	2	

There is no case of dispossession. Tenancy is generally for 3-4 years. In wet lands the tenants deliver to the occupants half the produce (the hay being the tenants') but in dry lands the tenants generally pay the occupants 8 as. to Re. 1 more than the Government assessment per acre. There are several cases where the tenant pays the occupant only the Government assessment. The reason for this appears to be that some (especially the village officers) manage to keep in their names large extents of agricultural land without expecting any immediate profit, but making it practically impossible for landless tenants or labourers to get land from Government by *darkast*. 5 tenants do other work in addition to agriculture.

4. 31 families earn their bread by manual labour in fields other than agricultural, out of which 17 are of untouchables. Many of these 31 families have sent relatives to Bombay for working as mill-labourers. This village has the tradition of cotton

weaving, and so the Bombay Mills offer a congenial avenue of employment to many of them. Wages are mostly paid in money, men getting Re. 0-5-4 a day and women Re. 0-2-8 a day. The domestic weaver fares no better, the account of a typical case working at the following figures :—

Material.

	O.S. Rs.
Price of yarn sufficient for one saree—18 cubits in length—20 counts— <i>i.e.</i> , 5 <i>ludies</i>	.. 2 8 0
Colouring stuff for body of the saree	.. 1 0 0
Colouring stuff for edge of the saree	.. 0 8 0
Finishing { Kas 4 tolas	.. 0 1 0
{ Sweet oil 2 tolas	.. 0 0 3
{ Ganji (thin rice paste)	.. 0 0 3
Total	.. 4 1 6

Labour.

Male-adult .1 day for dyeing (4 days are required to dye yarn sufficient for 4 sarees).

3 days for weaving

Total .. 4 days

Female-adult 1 day for arranging the yarn and preparing the edge.

Average Price

At which merchant buys (who advances money or the material required) 1 such saree 18 cubits long

.. .. 5 12 0

Amount available for distribution to the weaver and his wife :—

	Rs.
	5 12 0
Minus ..	4 1 6
	1 10 6

Re. 1-10-6 for 4 days man's work and 1 day woman's work, yields roughly 6 as. per day for the weaver and 3 as. per day for his wife. The merchant makes a profit of at least

Re. 1 per saree (he takes no interest from the weaver : it would not pay him to do so as the period intervening loan and supply of sarees is short—ranging between a week and a month according to amount of product). The weaver has no liberty to sell his own wares directly, having contracted away all his product to the sowcar on account of the loan. The capital outlay of a weaver's family for the profession, amounts to—

loom and accompaniments ..	..	7	0	0
other accessories ..	..	2	0	0
		9	0	0
		per loom.		

5. There is no land mortgage debt of any kind in this village.
Land mortgage debts.

6. 15 families have no debts, and the total debt of 49 families works at Rs. 2,465, the average debt per indebted family working at Rs. 50-5-0 nearly. The interest charged is generally between Re. 1 and Re. 1-4-0 per month, *no commission being allowed to merchants on sale of harvest* (except of course the usual additions in order to make up for later decrease in quantity, etc.). This absence of commission is probably due to the businesslike temperament of the people who take model from the weaving families. It is also noteworthy that the average debt per indebted family is particularly low here.
Other debts.

7. Practically all preserve seed. Those who borrow from neighbours or from merchants pay 50 per cent. more at harvest time. It is only in this and another of the 8 villages inspected, that people know that there is a Government Department like the Agricultural Department. An Agricultural Inspector seems to have visited the village recently and taken an application for the supply of tobacco seed.
Seed supply.

8. The debt-free raiyats sell their produce at Armoor, merchants of which place sell paddy to Nizamabad rice-mills. The Dichpalli-Nirmal road is now being much improved. Local measurements are—
How produce is disposed of.

5 $\frac{3}{4}$ measure seers	=	1 paili.
16 pailies	=	1 maund.
20 maunds	=	1 khundi.

Crops	Harvest price secured by the debt-free raiyats		Present Hyder- abad price	
	Rs.		Rs.	
paddy	..	10 a palla	Rice	18-25 a palla
jawari	..	12 a palla		11-14 ¹ / ₈ a palla
til	..	14-16 a palla		24-36 a palla

All the crops are measured in Government sealed seers. But this admits of the use of other measures "as good", and of a good deal of irregularity—how much a measure holds largely depending upon the will, skill and the physical prowess of the measurer.

9. The prevalent rates vary between—

Land Revenue
assessment.

		Per acre		
		Grade I.	Grade II.	Grade III.
dry land	..	Rs. 2-8-0	Rs. 1-4-0	8 as.
wet land	..	Rs. 16	Rs. 11	Rs. 9
garden land	..	..	..	Rs. 10

The total remission granted this year is Rs. 819-4-0, and this represents the extent of neglect of wet land cultivation.

10. The taste for partitions among members of joint families is gaining ground. In Kotharmur there are cases where partitions have been entered in the village registers, but the partitioners live together, cultivate together and eat together. The idea seems to be that at any time it must be convenient to the partitioners to separate without any hitch. For purposes of this investigation these partitions have not been taken into account because there is no partition in fact either in agricultural operations, or in the yield, or living.

There are 3 tanks all of which are in bad condition. 15 irrigation wells there are, out of which 10 are Government wells.

Milk supply there is none in summer. After the rains the villagers expect to have an average daily supply of 20 seers. The houses are frail and ill-kept, there being only 2 good houses belonging to 2 of the well-to-do landholders of the place. Most of the houses are thatched, and in rainy weather the people must be subjected to a great deal of discomfort and illness.

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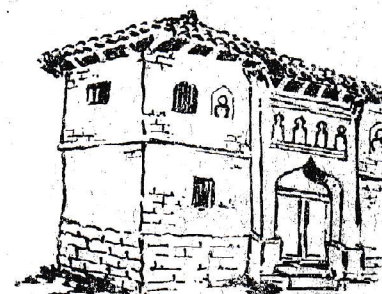
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A MONOGRAPH

ON

KOTHA ARMUR

(ARMUR TALUK, NIZAMABAD DISTRICT)



EDITOR

A. CHANDRA SEKHAR

OF THE INDIAN ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICE

Superintendent of Census Operations, Andhra Pradesh



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