

Process of De-Peasentisation in Marathwada: A Comparative Study of Two Villages in Osmanabad District

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This is an empirical study of two villages in Osmanabad district of Marathwada region. Understanding changing agrarian relations has been assuming special significance in the recent years which has broader implications on the economy and food security. In this context of agrarian change that has been witnessed in this region, five key issues need worth addressing at this juncture. These are i) tenancy and sharecropping, ii) labor relations and sharing mechanisms, iii) increased participation of women in agriculture, iv) disenchantment of youth towards agriculture, and v) reduction in area under food production. At times, when there are debates on the process of “De-Peasentisation” and increased threats to food security, there are also debates on “Re-Peasentisation” to engage peasants back to their production processes in agriculture. The findings of this study reveal that there are contrasts and commonalities in the selected facets of agrarian transformation.

[Key words: Agrarian relations, De-Peasentisation, Re-Peasentisation, Labor relations, Feminization of Agriculture]

This is an empirical study of two villages in Osmanabad district of Marathwada region. Despite of being part of drought prone area, during past two decades, these villages has been undergoing rapid transformation in its agrarian sector. Amongst the villages, one is irrigated and the other is under rain-fed condition. The findings of this study reveal that there are contrasts and commonalities in the selected facets of agrarian transformation.

Understanding changing agrarian relations has been assuming special significance in the recent years which has broader implications on the economy and food security. At times, when there are debates on the process of “De-Peasentisation” and increased threats to food security, there are also debates on “Re-Peasentisation” to engage peasants back to their production processes in agriculture. Stagnated agricultural growth in the country which could not attain even 2% growth rate, compel us to examine what is happening to this sector at a micro level.

In this context of agrarian change that has been witnessed in this region, five key issues need worth addressing at this juncture. These are i) tenancy and sharecropping, ii) labor relations and sharing mechanisms, iii) increased

participation of women in agriculture, iv) disenchantment of youth towards agriculture, and v) reduction in area under food production.

The study brings out changing relations in production as there is a movement from subsistence to commercialization of agriculture (Patnaik 2007) has focused this shift in recent years. This commercialization and mechanization of agriculture had lead to new alignment of labor sharing in agriculture; the issue has been elaborated by some of the prominent researchers like (Baboo 2012, Divakar 2000, and Karanth 2012). There are visible trends towards feminisation of agriculture in most of the farm related operations (Mathew 2012). In the midst of these growing complexities in agriculture, youth are increasingly unhappy with farming as profession. Therefore, migrating to urban centers and willing to make careers in non agricultural vocation (Gupta 2005) has been a predominant phenomenon. Up till now male dominated agriculture practices are in a flux. There is a need for in-depth understanding of all these processes at micro level to provide policy inputs to overcome the threat of food insecurity in the country and elsewhere. The present paper makes an attempt to capture some of these trends.

This paper is part of Doctoral research on Changing Agrarian Relations and Livelihood Options in Marathwada Region. The reference period of this study is of two decades; from the beginning of economic reform process i.e.1991-2011. This study is based on two adjoining villages located at a distance of five kilometers in Osmanabad district. Village Pakhrud is totally rain-fed one while Lanjeshwar is perennially irrigated village. The data is collected through qualitative and quantitative methods. The structured questionnaire was used and data collected from thirty percent households using stratified representative sampling method. The qualitative tools such as case studies, participant observation, and focus group discussion are used to get proper insights.

Changes in tenancy relations:

The most commonly practiced form of the tenancy in these villages is sharecropping (*Batai*). The extent of Batai mechanism is substantially decreased over the study period. This is mainly due to the non rewarding nature of farming in recent years. It is observed that both the land owner as well as the tenant cultivator (*Bataidar*) is at the losing end in the farm business. In recent years the land owners are luring the Bataidars to lease in land for share cropping by offering lucrative incentives. This is by way of reducing the cost of inputs borne by the Bataidar. These changes in ToR are favoring to the Bataidars. It appears that, despite these incentives, there is tendency among the Bataidars to decline such offers since there are ample opportunities in non-agriculture wage employment. This decreasing trend in share cropping over a period of two decades in these villages is noticeable.

Table 1: Changes in number of households engaged in Batai system of tenancy

Particulars	Pakhrud		Lanjeshwar#	
	1991	2011	1991	2011
No. of Bataidar engaged in leasing in	40	7*	25	3
No. of farmers leased out the land under Batai	60	10	30	5
No. of farmers willing lease out land	50	80	25	3
No of Bataidar willing lease in land	50	3	35	3

Source: focus group discussions (FGD); *Four Bataidars are engaged to maintain long term relations & social obligations with the land owner, #Due to assured irrigation after 1994, extensive cultivation of sugarcane led to increased self cultivation.

The terms and conditions of share cropping as mentioned earlier, also have been changed over two decades and these changes reflect the a kind of relief in cost sharing on the part of Bataidars. Also, it seems less exploitative as compared to past, and the Bataidars are in a better bargaining position.

Table 2: Changes in terms of reference in Batai System in study villages:

Particulars	Terms in 1991	Terms in 2011
Electricity bills/ Diesel for pumps	On equal cost sharing basis	Entire cost be borne by the land owner
Ploughing charges	Ploughing is done by <i>Bataidar/ Cultivator</i> using bullock power, owner does not share the cost for ploughing.	The land owner has to arrange tractor for ploughing. If the contract exceeds two years, then only <i>Bataidar</i> will plough it at end of contract.
Seeds in Kharif season	Entire seed cost borne by <i>Bataidar</i> for Tur and Black Gram	Entire seed cost borne by <i>Bataidar</i> for Tur and Black Gram. Cost of Cotton and Soya seeds is borne by <i>Bataidar</i> and land owner on equal share basis.
Fertilizers/Pesticides	Cost sharing on equal basis.	Cost sharing on equal basis.
Weeding	Entire cost borne by the <i>Bataidar</i>	Cost sharing on equal basis.
Harvesting/ threshing	The charges are paid in kind from the <i>Bataidars'</i> share.	The expenses are shared on equal basis from the harvest at the end.
Cost of Seeds in Rabi	Entire cost for Jowar	No change in the terms of

season	seeds and half of the cost of Wheat and Gram seeds is borne by <i>Bataidar</i>	reference over the period.
Land Revenue (tax)	On equal share basis	Entire expenses borne by the land owner
Sharing of Grains, fodder, cotton, fuel	Grains and fodder on equal share basis	Grains, fodder, cotton equal share basis.
Security deposit paid by Bataidar to land owner	Rs. 500 to 10,000	No security deposit is paid by the <i>Bataidars</i> .
Investment and cost recovery mechanisms in crop cultivation	Mostly <i>Bataidar</i> use to pay for the cost incurred and the same is recovered from the land owner after harvest.	Entire cost in cultivation is provided by the land owner and it is recovered from Bataidar after harvesting as per the ToR.

Source: *Data collected through focus group discussions*

Labour is an important input component in agricultural operations and availability of labour for production processes has far reaching consequences on relations concerning production. In the past, there were a variety of labour exchange arrangements in these villages which did not involve any monetary exchanges. Labour for collective farm operations was non-monetized in those days. The agriculture production cycle was relatively conducive for collective operations among different sections of the farmers i.e. small and marginal and to some extent the middle farmers. However, in the changing times, due to commercialization of agriculture, this informal arrangement of labour has lost relevance in these villages in the recent years.

Changes in Labour Sharing Mechanisms:

Traditionally agriculture was a way of life in India. Different sections of farmers such as the marginal, small and even the medium type of farm households developed certain mechanisms to overcome the shortage of resources such as labour, bullock power and equipments for cultivation. This traditional mutual exchange of labour mechanisms (Schlesinger 1981) had evolved to undertake various farm activities. Some of the prominent mechanisms practiced in these villages are *Sawad*, *Irjick*, *Pali perni*, and *Balutedar Pali perni*. These arrangements got disintegrated by the end of 1990s. The different forms in the combination of old and the new forms of sharing are still observed in these villages. This shift in labour exchanges is towards hiring for wages and in this course of change several new arrangements have been evolved. The extent of change in these mechanisms is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Changes in traditional labour sharing mechanism in study villages;

Traditional mechanisms	Pakhrud n=120				Lanjeshwar n=85			
	1991	% HH	2011	% HH	1991	% HH	2011	% HH
Sawad *	25	20.8	0	0	14	16.5	0	0
Irjik@	29	24.2	0	0	15	17.6	0	0
Pali Perni#	8	6.7	1	0.8	6	7.1	0	0
Balutedar Pali Perni \$	9	7.5	1	0.8	6	7.1	1	1.2
Emerging Mechanisms								
Guttekari (Labour contractor)	0	0	17	14.2	0	0	28	32.9
Bail Bhade (hiring out bullocks)	0	0	19	15.8	0	0	14	16.5
Contractual (Paishane) Pali Perni	0	0	7	5.8	0	0	11	12.9

* Season-long labour sharing mechanism, @ labour sharing for daylong urgent task with the community dinner # Sharing of bullock power for season long operations in exchange with access to grazing land, \$Sharing bullock power by Jajman to their artisanal households (Balutedar)

Gender and farm labour:

The growth of nonfarm occupations for men has resulted in to increased demand for women in farm wages. Cropping pattern and the nature of cultivating practices also have some relationship with choice of gender in the work force. In other words, some crops and certain operations are ideally suited for women and therefore, the women are engaged increasingly engaged as farm workers. The new cash crop such as Soyabean, cotton and sugarcane require more number of women workers as compared to the traditionally cultivated food crops.

Table 4: Sex wise distribution of farm workers in cultivation of crops (person days/ acre)

Crop	Cultivation status	Person days	Man days	Women days
Udid	Diminishing	14	6	8
Tur	Diminishing	31	16	15
Jowar	Diminishing	33	20	13
Wheat	Slightly increasing	25	14	11
Gram	Slightly increasing	23	11	12
Soyabean (S)	Substantially increasing	35	13	22
Cotton (S)	Substantially increasing	80	35	55
Sugarcane(P)	Substantially increasing	110	45	65

Source: Focus group discussions (FGD) and field observations.(S- Seasonal cash crop, P- perennial cash crop)

This shift in area under food crops to cash crops has resulted in to substantial increase in employability of women workers. In early nineties out of the total farm employability, the share of women workers was 46.9 percent; in the year 2011 the participation of women workers increased to 56.4 percent. Thus there is increased participation of women as farm workers during past two decades (see table 5). While examining this increased farm employability across the gender, it was observed that in case of male workers there is an increase of 75.9 percent during past two decades. The increase in wage work for female farm workers has been 158 percent, which is more than twice to that of male workers. Thus there is feminisation of agriculture in the study period.

Table 5: Changes in cropping pattern and gender composition of farm workers (in 000 person days)

Particulars	Employability	Change in area (in acres) under cultivation and corresponding changes in farm workers (in 000) in the sample (Pakhrud +Lanjeshwar)					
		Area in 1991	Men workers	Women Workers	Area in 2011	Men workers	Women Workers
Crops	persons /acre						
Food crops	26 (14M+12W)	1463	20.48	17.56	661	9.26	7.93
S. cash crops	58(24M+34W)	0	0	0	420.5	10.09	14.30
P. cash crops	110(45M+65W)	20	0.90	1.30	405.5	18.25	26.36
Total	-	1483	21.38 (53.1)	18.86 (46.9)	1367	37.6 (43.6)	48.59 (56.4)

Figures in bracket indicates percentages of total employability; S- seasonal cash crops (Soya and cotton), P- perennial cash crop (Sugarcane)

Age and preference towards occupations:

Another phenomenon observed in Pakhrud that, during last twenty years. Out of the total workers, the younger generations (below forty years) are increasingly opting for nonfarm occupations. In this age group the individuals are shifting from farm based occupations to nonfarm activities. The elder individuals (above forty years) still have inclination to work in farm sector. In the overall workforce, there is an increase in number of individuals engaged in nonfarm occupations from 41 percent to 50 percent in the span of two decades (See table 6)

Table 6: Age group and changes in occupation of individual workers in the sample:

Village	Workers in Pakhrud				Workers in Lanjeshwar			
	1991 n=243		2011 n=373		1991 n=157		2011 n=287	
Age group	Farm	Non farm	Farm	Non farm	Farm	Non farm	Farm	Non farm
<20 years	0	0	7 (35)	13(65)	0	0	9(48)	10(52)
21-40 Years	36(62)	22(38)	68(38)	110(62)	21(75)	7(25)	62(48)	67 (52)
41-60 Years	88(57)	66(43)	97(64)	54(36)	104(87)	16(13)	93(77)	28(23)
>61 Years	20(64)	11(36)	16(67)	8(33)	25(86)	4(14)	17(94)	1(6)
Total	144 (59)	99 (41)	188 (50)	185 (50)	130 (83)	27 (17)	181 (63)	106 (37)

Figures in parenthesis indicates the percentages to the total workers in corresponding group

In case of Lanjeshwar the engagement of workers in farm sector is higher compared to that of Pakhrud this is attributed to the higher area under irrigation. However the youngsters (below forty years) have shown the similar trend of leaving the farm based occupations and inclined to engage themselves in nonfarm activities. This trend shows the choice to leave the farming which does not have a status in the present context and opting for better rewarding occupations. These youth are accepting a lower paying white colored job which is a status symbol for them. It also indicates that even in irrigated areas the young generation is not happy with the traditional farm business.

Food Security:

In the process of commercialisation of agriculture, the priority of farmers has been shifted from cultivation of food crops to commercial crops. The reason of this shift is well elaborated by (Banerjee 2011), according to him the centralised procurement of food grains from within the green revolution (GR) technology area by the food corporation of India is the major cause for this shift. The cotton and soyabean are the recently introduced seasonal cash crops in these villages. While Sugarcane is perennial irrigated traditional crop which is increased in terms of area by almost 25 times in Lanjeshwar and about two times in Pakhrud. These changes in cropping pattern have drastically reduced the area and production of staple food crop of Jowar and the pulses like pigeon pea (Tur), black gram (Udid) and green gram (Mung). However, this has resulted in increase in relative wages of farm workers. This phenomenon is similar to the study in Uttar Pradesh (Pandey 2012). This decrease in food production was found prominent in the irrigated village compared to the rain-fed village (See table 7).

Table 7: Changes in food production (in quintals/ year) in study villages:

Food crops	1991	2011
Cereals Pakhrud	5961	3798 (-32.3)
Pulses Pakhrud	1765	1036 (-42.3)
Total Pakhrud	7726	4834 (-37.4)
Cereals Lanjeshwar	8445	2607 (-69.1)
Pulses Lanjeshwar	2550	445 (-82.5)
Total Lanjeshwar	10995	3052 (-72.2)

Figures in bracket indicates the percentages change in production over last two decades

Conclusions

Past two decades have made far reaching implications in the agrarian production relations in these villages. The shift from subsistence oriented production to commercialisation of agriculture has resulted in not only dismantling the traditional sharecropping relations but also adversely affected the labour relations which were mutually beneficial. Thus, this era of restructuring the traditional agrarian production and labour relations headed towards commercialisation of these arrangements and mechanisms. The growing nonfarm occupations are driving away the men folk from the farming and the women folk have to share the increased burden of farm activities. In a way these larger changes are compelling the women of the marginalised to shoulder the additional responsibility of the marginalised farm sector. The younger generations are losing interest in farming as an occupation. As it is clearly reflected in the preceding analysis, Expansion and modernisation of agriculture, substantial area under food crops is being diverted to other commercial crops. This trend is forcing the poor and the marginalised to depend more on PDS rather than growing their own food consequently, leading to food insecurity. Therefore, the paper argues for a comprehensive agrarian policy to subside the adverse effects on this sector. In this context the recent debate that has been set in on “re-peasentisation” might make some sense in the years to come.

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