

**Transformations and Transitions of the Rural in India:
Mapping Trajectories, Analysing Challenges and Possibilities**

Proceedings of the Fourth Annual Network of Rural and Agrarian
Studies (NRAS) International Conference

Report compiled by
Balmurli Natrajan, Satendra Kumar and Richa Kumar
with rapporteurs Apoorva Gautam, Budhaditya Das,
Divya Sharma, Sharib Zeya, and Usman Javed

Hosted by the G.B. Pant Social Science Institute, Allahabad
December 18-20, 2015

Workshop supported by
Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR)

Introduction

The 4th International Conference of the NRAS was inaugurated by Prof. Pradeep Bhargava, Director of the GB Pant Social Science Institute, Allahabad. The theme of the conference was “Transformations and Transitions of the Rural in India: Mapping Trajectories, Analysing Challenges and Possibilities.”

A brief welcome address, on behalf of the NRAS, highlighted the goal of the NRAS to bring together academics, farmers, activists and others, in promoting better research on agrarian and rural issues and in working towards influencing pedagogy and policy. The highlight of the 4th NRAS international conference was participation by some farmers from different parts of Uttar Pradesh who shared their concerns with the group and sat through two days of presentations. The NRAS had made arrangements for Hindi translation of the presentations and discussion for the benefit of farmers, who also asked questions to various panelists. A special farmers’ session was scheduled for the afternoon of the first day.

The opening session began with a farmers and workers song “Mere Liye Kaam Nahi” by a group of students from GBPSSI followed by the address of Shri Bhandarilalji, Shri Ram Janakji, and some other farmers from Bundelkhand and Banda regions of Uttar Pradesh. These farmers outlined the major problems faced by their communities including the rise of pests and diseases due to monocropping, growing environmental distress and vulnerability due to frost, unseasonal rain, and cold weather, less and delayed compensation from the state in cases of crop loss, and rising farm debt.

The papers in the first session on ‘Agriculture and Agrarian Relations’ resonated with similar concerns. They included a discussion of ways to tackle ecological challenges such as water scarcity and increasing climate variability in the Himalayan region; the transformation of production practices by new, small scale technologies for weeding and their ecological implications in eastern India; the changing agrarian practices of adivasi groups in central India; and the uneven regional development of agriculture in India and its implications for agrarian policy.

The second panel on ‘Capital, Markets and the New Economy’ presented information on new modes of engagement of rural people today with changing dynamics of capital, knowledge, markets, and state institutions. New intermediaries in rural areas such as NGOs, petty officials, market agents, and caste faction leaders are able to channel opportunities for mobility to select groups of people through specific languages of change such as development, rights, livelihoods, or good health. The papers showed how such languages were surprisingly, often exclusive, and that outcomes for people were shaped by the ways in which these languages intersected with modes of exercising power in the rural space, through the hierarchies of caste, class and gender.

In the special panel discussion of farmers, the major themes centred around land acquisition and its sociopolitical and economic consequences, problems related to the growing cost of production and fluctuating prices, and the role of special interests in influencing pricing policy, procurement policy, and compensation issues. Farmer participants keenly followed the papers in the third and fourth session which were about identity based conflicts and land acquisition, which resonated with their own experiences.

The third session on village studies had a wide ranging set of papers on the issue of identity, group belonging and conflict between groups. By focusing on the everyday interactions (and a decreasing

level of interdependency) between the groups, the papers sought to find explanations and meanings for particular phenomena – a gift giving, a massacre, a rise in communal violence, and differential changes in literacy rates. The discussion focused on choices of methodologies and theories of explanation, especially in the challenges in locating and attributing causality through multiple disciplinary lenses.

The fourth panel on land acquisition highlighted the linkages between the state, the legal apparatus, ideas about development and progress, and the lives of communities caught in the process. The papers questioned the rules, norms and values that are taken-for-granted in the mainstream obsession for economic growth, and which have marginalised the voices of communities set to lose their land. The panel showed how the state was not a homogenous entity and points of intervention and resistance emerged through the contradictions and conflicts that characterised the process.

In the final roundtable on the agenda for research and pedagogy, the discussion began with the role of the NRAS, as a community of researchers, and its possible engagement with “organic intellectuals”—in their contexts, using their assumptions and being part of their epistemic community. One farmer activist cautioned against valourising ‘experience and grass-rootedness’, and instead, suggested finding ways for such discussions to reach farmers who are distressed and for their experiences to be shared and understood by people here (in such discussions). That could be the beginning of a meaningful dialogue. There was a fruitful discussion on pedagogical issues centred around an undergraduate agrarian sociology course that helped participants think of ways of encourage students to take up these concerns.

The third and final day saw enthusiastic participation in the 2nd Mentoring Initiative of the NRAS with 22 mentees and 12 mentors participating. Participants were grouped according to research area and expertise and linked with mentors. The feedback received was overwhelmingly positive and is collated at the end of this report.

On behalf of the NRAS, the international conference was concluded with a Vote of Thanks, recognising the contributions of Satendra Kumar and the faculty, staff and students of the GB Pant Institute of Social Sciences to making the conference a vibrant success. The NRAS especially acknowledged the guidance and support of the Director of GBPSSI, Prof. Pradeep Bhargava, in encouraging the group to host the conference at Allahabad. Special thanks were rendered to Richa Kumar of IIT, Delhi for her continued support to organising the NRAS meets.

The NRAS held a meeting of the core committee and interested volunteers on 20th December 2015. The group finalised a publication plan and decided that the venue of the 5th NRAS international conference would be the Nabakrishna Choudhary Institute of Social Sciences, Bhubaneswar, Orissa under the guidance of the Director, Prof. Srijit Mishra.

Publication Plan

1. *Proceedings of the 4th International Conference* will be uploaded to the new NRAS website (ruralagrarianstudies.org).
2. Work has been completed on a *Special Issue of Seminar*, which will be published in **May 2016**.

3. The NRAS has received offers from *Springer to publish an edited volume* on “Studying the Rural: Transformation and Transitions of the Rural in India” with a selection of the best papers presented during the 3rd national conference held at Bhopal in 2014 and the 4th international conference held at Allahabad in 2015. Work on this volume will continue in 2016 and we hope to have a draft ready for publication by 2017.

Detailed Rapporteur Notes for each Panel

Panel I: Agriculture and Agrarian Relations

Chair: AR Vasavi, Independent Scholar

Vasavi introduced the first panel of the conference. The papers in this session focussed attention on different aspects of agriculture as a form of production. These include ecological challenges such as water scarcity and increasing climate variability; the impact of commercialisation and ensuing indebtedness as well as new production technologies and the intensification of unequal, complex social relations. She suggested that while most of the papers in the panel draw on site specific research to provide useful insights, it is important to collectively reflect on what questions they raise at the all India level.

Shambu Prasad C., Pratyaya Jagannath and Sabarmatee, IRMA, Anand

Agriculture Mechanisation, Labour and Public Policy: The contrasting tales of Power tillers and Mandwa Weeders in Odisha.

In this presentation, the authors outline the dominant narrative of agriculture mechanization since independence in India. They argue that this narrative is based on experiences of selective states like Punjab and Haryana and then draw on trends and practices in Odisha to suggest the need for a divergent understanding that can be useful for formulating better policy options for agricultural technology in the future. The driving question Prof. Prasad begins with is whether it might be more apt for a state like Odisha to learn from the experiences of agricultural mechanization in Bangladesh rather than large scale farming in Punjab. He recalls a joke in ICRISAT that only those with a PhD can rise in the organisation—PhD being the abbreviation for Punjab, Haryana and Delhi—to emphasize the dominance of these states in the agrarian policy space in India.

This study is situated in the context of the government of India's policy to bring the 'Green Revolution' to Eastern India, and a recent paper by Stephen Biggs, Scott Justice, David Lewis (2011) *Patterns of Rural Mechanisation, Energy and Employment in South Asia: Reopening the Debate* in Economic and Political Weekly, that examines the variation in policy and outcomes in agricultural mechanization in South Asia. The paper by Biggs, Justice, and Lewis (2011) set the premise that labour intensive and small scale mechanization driven agricultural development in Bangladesh provides a better model for policy formulation in the Eastern states of India than the experience of large-scale Green Revolution model implemented in Punjab and Haryana.

One of the standard parameters for measuring and understanding mechanization in the policy domain in India is 4W tractors. Based on this standard policy parameter, Odisha is considered as a state that is 'lagging behind' in the official narrative. However, if one goes beyond this standard measure and narrative, the agriculture sector in Bangladesh is much more mechanized than India's. Recently, the use of mini tractors or 2W tractors has been on the rise in Nepal as well, and most farmers have bought it without any state subsidy. Bangladesh has mostly only 2W tractors. In contrast, in India, for every ten 4W tractors, only one 2W tractor is sold. Therefore, Prof, Prasad argues Indian policy makers have a lot to learn from these smaller South Asian countries. The 4W tractors, part of the Green Revolution model in India, are mostly concentrated in the two states of Punjab and Haryana. The larger government support and investment in research and development in India, along with a much slower spread of small machinery is a paradox.

Examining the trend in Odisha in the period 1970-2012/2013, Prof. Prasad suggests that while for a long time there has been a steady increase in sales of 4W tractors, more recently a counter trend can be observed. Odisha is now the state with the maximum number of 2W tractors or power tillers, with sales going up between 2003-04 and 2013-2014. One-fourth of the power tillers in the country are sold in Odisha. This has not happened because of favourable policy incentives through subsidies but is largely a supply driven phenomenon. Further sales of 4W tractors are dipping in strongholds like Punjab and Haryana as well. The regional variation in Odisha in the spread of power tillers though can be explained through the presence or absence of subsidies. Their use is predominant in coastal Orissa and absent in Southern parts. Most agro-service centres are in the Chief Minister's district Ganjam that shows how distribution of resources is politically shaped.

The example of power tillers shows the disconnect between the focus of the policymakers and the needs of farmers and what is possible if policy incentives are right. This is further reinforced by the example of another machine suited for small farmers- the Mandwa weeder. The Mandwa weeder is an innovation that emerged outside the institutional establishment but has spread rapidly, and Odisha again has the maximum number of users. Mechanical weeding with this weeder is enabled by growing rice without flooding the fields. Further, unlike other mechanical weeders supplied by the state, which are mostly operated by men because they are designed for them, women are also using the Mandwa weeder. This weeder, which emerged from civil society, has gained popularity despite no marketing efforts supporting it. He then cites some other such examples of innovations that emerged from civil society in other parts of the country.

In conclusion, Prof Shambu raised some concerns that need to be considered in formulating policy. The first is the broad issue of sustainability of state subsidy regime, the second is the credit system favouring bigger farmers which allows them to adopt technological innovations, and the third is the neglect of gendered dimensions of agricultural technological innovation. Based on the Odisha case study, he made the following tentative recommendations. A 'Make in India' campaign could be initiated that focuses on agricultural machinery. The success of 2W tractors in Odisha provides an opportunity for proactive engagement and to chart a path that values local experiments. It calls for revising the current subsidy regime that supports large machinery and 'Green Revolution' model of agricultural production. Policies should be developed for specific regions and states that are suitable to their particular social and environmental needs. Overall, Odisha needs to be a part of agricultural mechanization story and policy modelling in India which has for long been dominated by the Green Revolution states.

Aradhana Singh, IIT Kanpur

Secure Subsistence: Practicing alternative farming approach to fight the effects of Climate Change in the hill state of Uttarakhand

The author begins by briefly describing the geography and political economy of the hill state of Uttarakhand. Uttarakhand, is a predominantly agrarian economy, with 90% of the area being hilly terrain and 78% of the population is rural.

The paper examines interventions to combat climate change, which is adversely affecting hill agriculture in the region. While global temperatures are said to have risen by 0.74 degree celsius on average, the Himalayas are warming more than the average. Climate change is visible in the transformation of species composition of flora and fauna, as well as the faster melting of glaciers in

the region. Further, rainfall and snowfall patterns are fluctuating, extreme drought in recent years has led to reduced availability of water for irrigation, an increase in weeds and diseases which has adversely affected crop yields. Therefore, the challenges faced by mountain communities are immense, particularly given the limited livelihood options available apart from agriculture. Hill communities also do not have access to adequate services and infrastructure and are totally dependent on rain-fed small-scale agriculture for sustenance.

In the author's field site of Uttarkashi district, there is also relatively less migration for work compared to other districts. This is because the area comprises fertile land conducive for agriculture and people also make a living from the various opportunities generated by the annual pilgrimages to holy shrines in the area. However, both agriculture and pilgrimage are seasonal activities, and do not generate sufficient income for sustenance throughout the year. Climate change is leading to additional losses to the meagre seasonal incomes.

In this context, the author examines the work of an NGO that is assisting farmers to cope with climate change through adaptation strategies. These strategies include diversification of crops, growing more short-duration and lucrative crops such as marigolds, chrysanthemums, fruits and vegetables. The NGO has carved out product specific zones and approximately 3000 men and 2000 women from hill villages are involved in their projects. The author presents several quotes from several women talking about their experiences with the project and earning an income. For instance one woman growing marigolds says she earned 5000Rs from her first crop despite the bad drought that year. Another woman farmer reports making a profit by growing kidney beans. The NGO is also enabling farmers to use technology to improve the production and marketing of crops. Farmers are connected with experts using the Internet to improve their production techniques and address any problems. The NGO is making efforts to include women who are generally not considered 'farmers' but only labour as they do not own the land. The author argues that in this case men and women are benefitting equally from the project. They are provided training for growing 40% cash crops and the rest of the land devoted to growing traditional food crops for self-consumption. The idea is to prioritise food security.

The biggest constraint the NGO is trying to address is to include women substantively. Though women are the main agricultural workers in the region comprising 80% of farmers and work more than animals and men combined, they have historically not been able to get loans or insurance, or benefits of other agriculture related schemes since the land is not in their name. More broadly, fragmented landholdings and poor irrigation infrastructure poses a challenge to food and income security.

In the fight against climate change, subsistence agriculture becomes important for food security but lack of access to productive inputs makes agriculture commercially less productive. However, adaptation strategies can minimize impact. The author in conclusion argues that in the face of climate change, farmers are willing to take commercial risks because the former is perceived as a bigger risk.

Buddhaditya Das, School of Human Ecology, Ambedkar University Delhi

Everyday Realities of Upland Agriculture: An Ethnographic Study of Forest Villages in Central India

This paper is a part of the authors' ongoing PhD research. The research is situated in the context of the enactment of the Forest rights Act in Harda district of Madhya Pradesh. He begins by suggesting

that his field site and ethnographic research challenged his activist understanding of tribal rights. The adivasi communities in his field site are transitioning toward commercial cultivation and aspire to be farmers. They are beginning to grow wheat and adopt Green Revolution style agriculture in an extremely hostile terrain where it is hard to access hybrid and improved varieties of seeds and fertilisers. Even the roads are just beginning to be built.

The question that he addresses is why is the shift toward commercial cultivation happening. The adivasis are trying to leverage the state to enable this shift but have been disappointed so far. Thus, his research tells the story of adivasi agency in the last twenty years which diverges from the story of activism around struggle for rights to forest. His research site includes 42 villages in the Satpuda hills inhabited by Gond and Korku adivasis, and the adjoining Harda plains that include 469 revenue villages inhabited by Jat/Gujar farming communities. The interactions and the contrasts between the hills and the plains shape the story.

The hill villages comprise smallholder farmers with less than one hectare. These forest villages were settled by the British to procure labour for forest plantations. The adivasis who were settled were given temporary land titles. They were tenants at will who had to be available to provide free labour on the plantations. After independence the forest department has issued new titles but this has also led to the problem of 'encroachments'. People are occupying forest land. They are mostly landless cultivators growing corn and soybean in the kharif season, and wheat and chickpeas in the rabi season. This site is illustrative of regional disparities within India, where pockets of adivasi poverty are nested within areas of affluence. In this case the hills are situated next to the Harda plains, which are agriculturally prosperous-the 'Punjab' of Madhya Pradesh, and where the Tawa river has been dammed. Irrigation made the intensive wheat-soybean production cycle possible.

The story of adivasi deprivation begins in the middle of the nineteenth century. The British government reserved the forests and banned shifting cultivation and restricted mobility. The primary purpose was to ensure labour supply for colonial forestry, and adivasi communities not caste villagers were considered apt as they were habituated to forest use.

After independence and in the period before the 1980s, there was extreme scarcity and poverty and only precarious livelihoods were possible. The available work included migrating to the plains in Harda to work as hired labour in wheat fields or work on plantations. In the monsoon season, the adivasis would stay in the upland and cultivate millets. Practices of forced labour continued post independence as the adivasis were compelled to perform *begar* or free labour for forest department officials. They worked as runners, couriers and performed other random chores. These practices ended in the 1990s and wage work on the plantations also declined. In the 1990s as the opportunities for forest labour declined, the wheat-soybean cultivation increased with irrigation and subsidies becoming available for green Revolution style agriculture. The Harda model of Joint Forest Management (JFM) introduced by the government in 1991 was distinct and focussed on infrastructure development and improving agrarian livelihoods. In 1994 the Shramik Adivasi Sangathan started mobilising forest villagers in the region. In the 2000s there was decline in labour requirement in the wheat fields.

The JFM's peculiar emphasis on agrarian improvement provided the impetus for the shift from subsistence millet cultivation to commercial cultivation by the adivasis, which was also enabled by the decline of other livelihood options. However, the benefits of JFM reached only those who had land titles and were loyal to forest department officials. The notion of agrarian 'improvement' diffused more widely through imitation, what is colloquially referred to as 'dekha dekhi' or what the

the Adivasis refer to as - 'we saw others and started doing this'. They had also for decades witnessed the prosperity in the lowland wheat fields. Their desires were shaped by their work as labour in the lowlands. The cropping patterns as well as diets among adivasi households have transformed. Wheat is perceived as a symbol of prosperity and commercial agriculture has become an important feature of upland life. Migration patterns have changed too. They migrate before the wheat season to buy inputs for cultivation. The author concludes by saying that his attempt is to understand this trajectory of change through emphasizing adivasi agency.

P.S. Vijayshankar, SPS, Bagli, Madhya Pradesh

Regional Inequality in India – A Long View

This paper argues that it is important to go beyond the framework of states to the level of regions in India to understand inequality shaped by socio-cultural diversity. Regions have a long history and provide a better framework in charting patterns across the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial period. The regional differences shaped historically are deeply entrenched along the three pillars of ecology, institutions and politics. Inequalities across regions have continued to widen in the post independence period and are visible in divisions such as valleys and plains, coastal versus hill regions, plateaus and interiors, dry and wet regions etc.

There are very few studies that worked with a regional framework. One of them is Tirthankar Roy's economic history of regions that looks at data from 1908 in terms of the following parameters: population; area; rainfall; agricultural land; land per capita; irrigated area; road/rail mileage; land revenue per square kilometre. Regional framework makes it possible to chart patterns and indicate how areas such coastal areas/deltas and floodplains have been more privileged than upland areas.

In this paper, the author attempts to provide an overview of regional differences in agricultural growth in the last four decades (1962-2008), using datasets compiled by GS Bhalla and G Singh (2012). GS Bhalla and G Singh created a database, which includes indicators, such as, cropped area, value of production and productivity. This dataset has limitations, for instance it only includes 35 crops, the northeastern parts of the country are not included, livestock is not included and price movements are not captured. Nevertheless, it is a useful large dataset. It is possible chart out high and low productivity regions among the 52 identified regions across the three periods (1962-65; 1980-83; 2005-08).

There are consistent high productivity regions: Punjab (2 regions); Tamil Nadu (2 regions); Kerala (2 regions); Andhra Pradesh coastal; Karnataka coastal. In the low productivity regions 7 out of 10 are consistently repeated in states like Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. These classifications in productivity rankings can also include dynamic elements. The third group includes regions, which are low productivity but high growth such as north and north east Rajasthan; Saurashtra in Gujarat; Telangana, and the Malwa region in Madhya Pradesh.

Focussing on the Malwa region in Madhya Pradesh, the author explains how a regional framework can help identify the specific factors in transformations over time. The Malwa region in western Madhya Pradesh before the 1980s was dry and largely rain-fed. The crops grown included millets, pulses, sorghum, red gram and cotton. With tube well and groundwater irrigation expansion post 1980s, and given the shortage of oilseeds in the national context, the cropping pattern shifted to a wheat and soybean cycle. This shift was enabled by massive public investment in rural electrification, marketing and processing infrastructure (OILFED and processing plants were instituted). Millets

and cotton were eliminated from the cropping cycle. This transformation has led to a situation where many districts have critical groundwater level according to 2009 data.

In Malwa, the drivers of change include the presence of strong agricultural castes such as the Patidars, Saindavs and Khati. This is exceptional in the social context of Madhya Pradesh where typically there are upper castes, a highly divided Other Backward Castes, Scheduled castes and tribes, and with no strong agrarian castes.

In conclusion the author highlights the kind of analysis a regional framework makes possible at the national level. For instance the regions that have been left behind in the agrarian growth story are largely concentrated in a few states. The presence of tribal populations partly explains backwardness in 50% of these regions. The other identifiable pattern is that the much-needed public investment does not come on its own but requires agrarian mobilizations, and hence the strong agrarian castes and their ability to mobilize becomes a significant factor.

Discussant's Remarks: Jagpal Singh, IGNOU Delhi

The discussant highlights the issues from all the four papers that have implications for further research. The four papers bring insights from different areas in the country reflecting regional diversity and the specificity of challenges in agriculture. These included mechanization and policy issues; alternative farming as a solution to climate change in Uttarakhand; an ethnographic study of forest areas, which examines the transition of adivasi communities to commercial cultivation. The papers raise both important theoretical and descriptive issues.

The discussant then draws attention to some gaps that can be addressed in each of the four papers. The first paper helps us understand the development of capitalism in a backward region- Odisha. The story of mechanization takes a different form here than in the Green Revolution areas of Punjab and Haryana, but the discussant disagrees on drawing lessons from neighbouring countries Bangladesh and Nepal, as well as on the subsidy issue. He suggests that the authors should reflect on their findings in relation to the larger debate going on in India on the issue of subsidies which broadly has two camps (references the debate between Amartya Sen and - Jagdish Bhagwati/Arvind Panagariya). The second paper usefully draws attention to the gendered dimensions of agricultural production. He suggests that it would be useful to look at how enabling women as producers' shapes gendered relations within the family, and what are the political dimensions of economic autonomy. The third paper shows how the state plays an important role in encouraging capital-intensive agriculture and in interrupting existing social power relations. He suggests affinities with the mode of production debate in the 1970s in India, which could be revisited to tease out some of the conceptual issues around the role of the state. The fourth paper provided the possible specific factors that led to agricultural improvement in Malwa, but it would be useful for the author to look at the policies that have led to shaping agricultural growth in different regions.

One of the gap in all the papers was that their attempt to understand rural transformation in mechanical/statistical terms, without paying adequate attention to human social relations. One of the most important tasks for scholars, he suggests, in the post Green Revolution period is to revisit our categories of analysis, as earlier categories such as landlords/rich farmers cannot capture the reality of today. The people referred to as 'farmers' are not dependent on agriculture solely for their livelihood anymore, which needs to be accounted for, as Jan Breman shows in his classic work 'Footloose Labour'.

Q & A session

KN Bhatt, GB Pant Institute: What are the ecological footprints of the transformations in Indian agriculture in the post-Green Revolution period? In the case of Uttarakhand what are the authors' thoughts on the fact that while nutritional value of millets is high, the yield is enough only for two-three months of consumption, the rest of the year households are dependent on the public distribution system? In India dryland agriculture constitutes 50%, and academic attention should be focussed on food security and also on ecological security.

Question: There were two common threads in all the papers – one is the role of intermediaries, who and what is being sustained by the state since it is clear that it is not the well-being of the farmers? Second, we are still obsessed with 'productivity'. Specifically, in the case of Uttarakhand – while Green Revolution model of farming interrupted the previous relationship with environment, do these new projects such as production of flowers also cause disruption in the name of empowering women and promoting sustainability? Are we witnessing the emergence of a new strong intermediate class which is working with the state and against the interests of the farmer?

Question: The discourse employed to justify land acquisition is that agriculture is no longer providing sustainable livelihoods. All the papers prove that is not true-so how can we speak to and challenge this discourse? What are the possibilities for progressive agrarian politics-alternative forms of mechanization or attention to gender relations?

Responses

Aradhana Singh: She agrees with the concerns that have been raised about focus on growing exotic species such as flowers which will displace cultivation of traditional crops such as millets and could widen disparities within the hill communities.

P.S. Vijayshankar: We have to move away from the notion of 'one size can fit all' and focus on what is happening inside these regions. Processes of rural transformation are highly dynamic and have to be captured through disaggregation. There is definitely need to pay attention to ecological footprint of agrarian production –particularly to the trend of capturing water for irrigation through borewells. He agrees that it is detrimental to focus exclusively on productivity. However, only that kind of long-term data is available currently and it includes only male workers. The Tirthankar Roy study has gleaned meticulous data from imperial records, and he also discovered a study by Daniel Thorner of the 21 classified ecological regions in the country in 1930, but it is not easily available. There is definitely a need to dismantle the land acquisition discourse. There is nothing called 'wasteland'. Any progressive agrarian policy has only come into being when farmers have organized and demanded change.

Budhaditya Das: On the issue of intermediaries- in Harda, the state is the intermediary-the forest guard, the sarpanch –they are points of access for inputs, pump sets for the adivasis. The educated youth among the communities who have managed to finish 12th grade are the ones employed as salesperson for seed and chemical companies. In this area millets cannot be called sustainable. They only supplemented wage labour in a precarious economy, and the quantity produced was not enough to feed families. The issue of land acquisition is complicated and there is dynamic equilibrium. In areas where people have seen agrarian prosperity through state support, they will resist land acquisition. The Sharmik Sangathan's popularity has waned among the adivasis as they want to become farmers and are interested in negotiating with the state instead of resisting the state.

Shambu Prasad: On the subsidy issue- one has to look at the institutions more closely. For instance in eastern India the subsidy encourages SRI but by combining line transplanting with hybrid seeds. If a farmer wants to do it with indigenous seeds, he cannot. Power tillers are being sold in West Bengal and no state subsidies are involved there. Also, given the current political economy it is impossible for the state to provide the kind of support that propped up the original Green Revolution. Organisation of farmers in itself is not sufficient for substantive transformation. The discourse has to change.

Question: Young boys from farming households go to school and learn about other things but there are no schools for agriculture- how and when will they learn farming?

Shambu Prasad: For the longest time there has been this assumption that agrarian knowledge is transferred by default from one generation to the next. But we need new kind of skills in farming and there is no state investment in agricultural education and research. The National Livelihoods Mission is paying some attention to the issue but not the Agriculture Department of the government.

Panel II: Capital, Markets and the New Economy

Chair: Shelley Feldman, Cornell University

The panel on 'Capital, Markets and the New Economy' discussed the shifts that have been witnessed in the rural pertaining to claims of economic growth and development of the state. The papers presented in the panel brought forward the emerging contestations that the 'rural' is facing vis a vis the state led development. The papers focused largely on the economy and labour.

Dayabati Roy, University of Burdwan, West Bengal

'Employment, Rights and Transformations in Neoliberal India'

Dayabati's paper addresses the ways in which rural people negotiate with the neoliberal policies of the government. Through her paper, Roy seeks to examine the people's contestation with the categorization of poor and the programmes aimed at alleviating poverty at the grass root level. The study conducted mainly in Singur and a few other parts of West Bengal, brings out clearly that on one hand where the locals with the support of the people's movement were strongly opposing the land acquisition in the name of development they were in no way unaware of the benefits that they were supposed to get under the MGNREGA. State government which on one hand was reluctant to implement MGNREGA as soon as it became an Act due to the operational hindrances, were keen to let the Tata Group come in and acquire land. The people's logic worked the other way round. In areas where the lands were acquired the agricultural labourers did not get work for months and they demanded the implementation of the MGNREGA so that they can get some work.

Questioning the role of these programmes in alleviating poverty and providing an answer to the losses incurred to the people by the land acquisition the paper argues that the findings in Bengal have been on the negative side. These programs do not address the structural causes of the poverty on one hand, and on the other hand the flawed implementation of these programmes and the reluctance of the government do not provide an answer to the aims of poverty alleviation especially in areas where dispossession is rampant. The paper argues that due to neo-liberal reforms, 'inequity' is reconstructed and also obscured, but, at the same time, is taken care of or negotiated continually by the government through newer kinds of programmes and policies thereby shaping and recreating new politics and new issues of contestation.

M Vijayabaskar, MIDS, Chennai

'Agrarian Transitions, Governmental Welfare and Emerging Labour Regimes: Insight from a Model State'

Vijayabaskar's paper addresses the contestations that the rural youth in Tamil Nadu express and experience in different regimes of development. His paper emphasizes the 'truncated agrarian transition' that emerges as a process of fulfilling the labour demands of the high economic growth model with a slow movement of labour to the non-agricultural sector. Despite the decrease in the share of agriculture in the state economy and the decrease in the share and the absolute cultivators, the percentage of small and marginal land holders in the rural areas have increased with a significant population still calling agriculture as their primary occupation. Though there is a decrease in the poverty ratio in the agricultural sector as well, but the families which are primarily agriculturalists staying closer to the poverty line.

On the other hand there is an increase in non-agricultural employment from 26.1% to 42.5% for men and from 16.4% to 27.6% for women during the period 1977/78–2009/10. Workforce has increased both as formal as well as casual labour. This trend may be indicative of a correlation between progressive diversification, on the one hand, and a distress-induced diversification, on the other. What seems to be alarming is the decline in the self employment as well as formal labour with an increase in casualized labour.

The paper argues that the welfarist interventions allow for the production of a translocal livelihood regime. Given the offer of welfare provisions as resident populations in a specific village, there is an incentive for members of agrarian households to stay back even as other members are rendered mobile. Welfare entitlements allow for the mobile members of households to try out new employment ventures as it offers a degree of income security. Such state interventions have also further incentivized workers to continue to stay in the villages as their costs of reproduction is further subsidized. Although NREGS has been criticized by certain segments of capital for depriving them of access to cheap labour, one needs to understand that these security nets allow capital to rely on a casualized workforce without having to invest in providing them with social security. Important trends in such labour regimes are the growing labour demands in the construction sector resulting in the unskilled workers travelling with their families to the nearby cities. In addition, the increase in the number of commuting workers in the garments and leather industries who commute by the company bus gives rise to a life which is simultaneously rural as well as urban.

Despite the poor returns from agriculture there has been little evidence of mobilization of farmers as an economic group. Rather they respond as caste groups to different political parties in the state. The paper discusses the mobility of the landed rural class to the urban areas and the investment of agricultural surplus in the non agricultural sectors as the prime reasons for lack of peasant mobilization.

Siddhartha Lodha, Sheetal Patil and Seema Purushothaman, APU, Bangalore

'Dynamism of Smallholder Farmers and Agri-produce Markets in and around Bangalore'

This paper (presented by Siddhartha Lodha) explores the situation when and under what situations do the small holders in urbanizing space continue farming as their preferential profession and when they move out partially or completely of this profession. The paper discusses the impact of market demand of the predominantly urban settings provide the farmers the option to continue with farming as their main profession with slight change in the production pattern and adapting to the market driven situations. The study situated in and around Bangalore argues that with the growing demand of fruits and vegetable in the urban markets there is a trend of increasing demand for exotic products like eucalyptus and flowers. These demands as well as supply are channeled through multiple actors and agencies aiding both the producers and consumers.

The farmers' decision to move partially or fully out of farming based occupations depends on a number of factors like the profits they get after paying commission to every actor in the distribution channel, the distance of their farm from the city and the availability of the transportation facilities as well as the time taken in the transportation, calculation of packaging and other associated costs, and reasons concerning their immediate monetary necessities.

Divya Sharma, Cornell University, USA

'Agrarian Work, Gendered Exclusions: The Shifts toward Socio-ecological Sustainability in post-Green Revolution Punjab'

This paper is the study of an organization that mobilizes villagers to have an alternate mode of agricultural production, i.e. chemical free natural/organic farming. The paper focuses on the organisation's effort to mobilize women for such activities and grow organic vegetables in the homestead land. Based in Bhatinda and Faridkot in Malwa region, Sharma looks at this mobilization as a form of contestation against the mal-practices emerging out of the Green Revolution and the inadequacy of the 'economistic' framework to explain the agricultural crisis in the region. The agricultural crises in Malwa region, especially the pest attack on cotton crop has led to use of pesticide at an alarming rate. Falling prices of cotton in the last few years, chronic debt, and increasing incidence of cancer among rural households are some of the manifestations of the crisis. This has resulted in the shift of farmer's choice of producing cotton to paddy cultivation resulting further in ground water depletion.

The organization aims at mobilizing women on issues centred around health concerns, based on the assumption that they are responsible for feeding their families, 'care more' about health, make decisions about meals and diets, and would be more receptive to such a narrative, unlike men, who tend to focus solely on higher yields and cash profits. Women are encouraged to grow vegetables on homestead land for household consumption, since gendered norms restrict them from going to the farm. The ethnography in the paper presents multiple responses that come from women of different strata of society and their experience of negotiations with the organisation's members as well as the male members of the households on the questions of health, economy, gender participation and development approach of the state. Sharma argues that the mediation by the organization in developing organic farming by providing support such as distribution of seeds and spreading awareness creates a discourse that reflects on the continuities of the effect that the techno-politics of neoliberal development has on the agrarian crisis.

Discussant's Remarks: Richa Kumar, IIT Delhi

All four papers look at this new class of intermediaries in rural India including state agents, NGOs, and market agents who are mediating between people and networks of opportunity / patronage / knowledge etc. This is a very important dimension that we must look at when studying rural transformation today.

Dayabati's paper highlights nodes of mediation in NREGA showing that there are some who benefit, others who don't in the process of implementing the program in West Bengal. What cultural, political, social linkages shapes such outcomes for people? What caste networks or power networks are in play in West Bengal through which NREGA is refracted? These would be important to identify. She mentions governmentality as being the mode of engagement with the population but how is the "population" defined? Who is engaged with and who is excluded / marginalised?

Vijaybaskar's paper presents a fine-grained hierarchisation of the rural in Tamil Nadu where we see the upper classes exiting to urban areas, the middle / lower OBCs aspiring for state support by making claims using the language of caste, and dalit groups making claims on the state using the language of rights. He notes that the lowest groups use the language of rights as citizens ("right" of the people not to be poor) whereas the OBCs are using the language of identity (caste). Many young

people from these OBC communities have education but no jobs, many from the farming community have aspirations lying elsewhere. They see the fruits of reservations going to the lowest groups and want to find some means to make claims upon the state for sustenance. This helps explain the nature of recent social conflict in rural areas in Tamil Nadu which is taking the form of identity politics.

Siddharth Lodha's paper studies the changing nature of markets and cropping patterns around Bangalore where smallholders are inserted into a new horticulture economy. He shows that there are multiple markets, multiple channels of transport and multiple crops one can choose to grow. What shapes these choices? When and where do farmers decide to sell? Who is able to participate in these economies is important to ask. How are some farmers able to continue to farm as urbanisation and real estate are taking over land around Bangalore is another question. Why do farmers choose to continue to farm and when and why do they choose to exit? These questions need to be asked.

Divya's paper looks at a most fascinating story of bringing organic methods of cultivation to the heart of the Green Revolution belt in Punjab. She shows how activists of this NGO use scientific discourses of cancer, health, ecology linking them to social discourses of a broken society afflicted by drugs, female infanticide, dowry etc. and makes a case for organic farming. She shows that although it is hard to mobilise farmers, women farmers have taken keen interest. Many women are able to grow nutritious food for their families, sell some and make some money on the side and this is giving them some form of independence and a voice in their family set up. Although women are mobilised under patriarchal norms of caring for their families or contributing to the family's welfare, it is resulting in some space for autonomy for these women.

Overall, these papers presented information on new modes of engagement of rural people today with new dynamics of capital, knowledge, markets, and state institutions. The new intermediaries are able to channel opportunities for mobility to select groups of people through select languages of change – whether development, rights, livelihoods, or good health. How these languages intersect with modes of exercising power in the rural space, shapes outcomes for people on the ground. These papers provide glimpses of how these dynamics are shaping rural India in the 21st century.

Panel III: Village India in 21st Century

Chair: Satish Deshpande, University of Delhi

Sudeep Basu

Diaspora and village transformation in India: Reflections on collective remittance practices in Gujarat's villages

The paper looks at the phenomenon of diaspora philanthropy understood as collective remittances in villages in the districts of Kutch, Mehsana and Anand in Gujarat. It tries to bring out the way these gifts are received, how they transform the communities and the symbolic negotiations that take place around them. The attempt is to try to figure out how the village is being constituted in the age of global migration.

The author observes that there is a variety of forms of giving and there is no single logic of this giving – donations range from being for religious causes to ones for developmental works in the village. Within this range, donations to temple establishments have predominated. Most donations do not fit the classical notion of *daan* because they are not based on the needs of the recipients, who are often not needy. What they do show us is how donations, patronage and *jajmani* relations from afar have wide significance in terms of creating different kinds of interdependencies, subjects and values.

The paper points to the existence of criticism of temple donation within the community (as against donations for developmental work). The conspicuous consumption of return migrants and their non-migrant kin is loathed by non-migrants in the villages and their donations are viewed by the latter as being investments in maintaining social prestige and are nothing to do with the betterment of the village as such.

The idea of *gupt daan* (secret donations) evoked by several respondents of the study, is a counter to the accusation of a socially unfavourable culture of giving. It can work well if the identity of the donor and recipient is maintained while the worthiness of the latter is assured. But when donations are given to trusts, NGOs, etc., the element of structure and constraint comes in which takes away from the original free, emotive, spontaneous spirit of giving. This also leads to an ever present anxiety over the worthiness of the trust/association. The process however does not involve any overt obligations from either the donor or recipient. This leaves the process open to interpretations and introduces an uncertainty in exchange, which is purposefully nurtured to make the bond between the parties more enduring.

The author uses the idea of the sacrificial, echoing Baudrillard to understand the acts of labour (developmental work) on the part of the recipients that morally challenge the diasporic donor to keep responding with more gifts and keeping the system of diasporic gift exchange going. The symbolic negotiation in these exchanges has a bearing on the constitution of status hierarchies around caste groups.

Another crucial point highlighted in the paper is the implication of these focused forms of giving for the larger concern with social justice, tackling deprivation and the state. Given that donors choose family and community networks to send remittances, the state gets left out and this also adds to the situation where basic civic amenities are neglected. The structuring of these remittances via

family/community networks and their distrust of formal institutions is at variance with the national narrative of the state being keen on tapping the potential of the Indian diaspora.

The paper ends by stressing the importance of an internal critique within the community and of asking the question ‘not just who, but what do we represent?’ Such a critique can cause the participants to reflect on the imagination of the village and make it possible for an engagement and critique of the idea of belongingness in the context of a globalized economy.

G Chandriah, GBPSSI, Allahabad

Foregrounding Caste Violence: A Case of Laxmipeta Massacre in a South Indian village

The paper starts by asking the following question – Why have there been a series of massacres in Coastal Andhra? (1985 – Karamchedu, 1991 – Chundururu, 2012 – Laxmipeta) The focus of the paper is the massacre of five Dalits (Malas) by members of the dominant caste (Kapus) in Laxmipeta village in Srikakulam district of Andhra Pradesh. The author argues that there isn’t a uniform process that leads to a massacre and identifies three levels or layers of the process. Firstly, changes in agrarian relations (Dalits moving from being agricultural labourers to cultivators). Second, changing *Vuru-wada* relations (spatial, residential relations within the village). Third, the way village level politics is linked to state politics and to dominant caste consolidation in the political domain.

The author provides us with a narrative corresponding to the three layers he identifies. It starts a decade back when a dam was sought to be constructed near Laxmipeta for which 300 acres was acquired from Laxmipeta and 6 surrounding villages. The displacement caused a change in the village residential pattern with Dalits and Kapus being placed near each other. This led to everyday conflicts happening over mundane issues. Of the 300 acres of land acquired for the village about 250 acres remained unused and was started cultivation on by the villagers. The Kapus took over 190 acres and dalits began cultivating the remaining 60. This led to a change in their position from agricultural labourers to cultivators. The Kapus during this period were mobilizing for the Praja Rajyam Party, as a consolidation against the Kammas and Reddys. This state level political consolidation led to a reassertion of caste hegemony at the village level. The village saw the election of a dalit woman as the Sarpanch because of the seat being reserved in the local elections. Her assertion became a threat to the privilege and material and political power of the Kapus. These three factors created a rupture in the village setup.

The author highlighted two further points. Firstly, that before a massacre there are social boycotts being instituted which serve the purpose of representing the dalits as the enemy of the village and rallying the other castes against them. Secondly, this consensus against the dalits is created not just in the specific village but in its neighbouring areas as well. In the Laxmipeta massacre people were mobilized from 6-7 surrounding villages and the act saw the participation of women and children as well.

Analysing the aftermath of the event, the paper underscores the following points. There was a disagreement among left and dalit organisations whether to see this as a class based or caste based conflict. The author argues for a layered understanding, and not simply a reduction to one category.

The question of representation also gets raised in the paper as the author highlights that all the bureaucratic positions (Mandal Revenue Officer, Circle Inspector, Station Inspector) as well as the

MLA position were held by dalits. Despite their presence they failed to take the moral lead in the deliverance of justice.

The paper ends by underscoring the crucial point regarding the NGOisation of the dalit movement which became an obstacle to it and the internal fissures among the different dalit communities that make sustained collective action difficult. It raises the critique of the dalit movement having become reactionary in the sense that it can only respond to violent incidents that take place.

Satendra Kumar, GBPSSI, Allahabad

Village Today: Agrarian Transformation, Emergence of New Sociality and Communal Violence in Western Uttar Pradesh

In this paper an attempt is made to arrive at an understanding of the rise in communal violence and occurrence of communal riots in rural western Uttar Pradesh. The author identifies four processes that combine to produce a new sociality. These are agrarian change, change in technologies of mobility (transport), entertainment, and changes in the political structure. The presentation proceeds through providing a sketch of a Muslim family located in the village and of the changed scenario in which the dominant caste Jats find themselves.

The author provides a detailed sketch of the life of Shamsu, a barber's son from Khanpur village who went on to become a driver in Dubai. His father worked as a barber and served not just the Jats but also other castes in the village for generations. The family stayed on a piece of land owned by a Jat landowner. With Shamsu getting a job in Dubai his father stopped working for others and with his salary they could afford to buy land within and outside the village. The family members, although they stay in the village, work outside. Their interaction with others in their village is restricted to only the Muslim families in the village (nais and lohars). Their life outside the village has greatly expanded owing to new technologies of communication and transport that allow factors external to their immediate setting of the village to have great influence in their lives. As examples of the same, one can think of smartphones and cable TV along with the ease of travel that has made the gulf setting have a deep impact on the lifeworld of Shamsu and his family. There is a noticeable increase in the religiosity of such upwardly mobile Muslim families in the region. This is reinforced by TV channels, such as Q TV and Peace TV, which are popular in the region and teach their viewers how to be good Muslims. The rise in popularity of groups like the Tabhleeghi Jamaat also play a significant role in influencing the public identity of Muslims in the region in a significant way.

Similar forces can be seen at work in the case of the Jats as well. One of the changes highlighted in the paper was the growing popularity of sects such as Dera Sacha Sauda and Radhaswamy instead of the Arya Samaj, which had a base among the Jats of the region. An increase in participation of religious festivals organized by the RSS and affiliated organisations can be noticed, with a consequent decline in the participation of agrarian festivals. TV channels such as Aastha have become popular and increased interaction with the outside world has had an impact on reconstituting their caste identity. Coupled with the agrarian crisis and decline of the *kisan* identity, this has led to the Jats demanding reservations and reforming their identity as a middle class Hindu.

The emerging new property relations, rise of a Muslim middle class and political empowerment have posed a threat to the dominance of the Jats. One of the aims of the communal riots, it can be observed, was the seizure of lands belonging to the artisanal Muslims. The riots can be understood

as an assertion of the dominance of Jats against the rise of the upwardly mobile Muslims in the region. This assertion also played out as a competition for occupying the public space in the village.

Discussant's Remarks: Balmurli Natrajan, Azim Premji University

All three papers in this set tackle the issue of identity, group belonging and conflict between groups. All three also situate their work in the everyday interactions (and a decreasing level of interdependency) between the groups. Each of them in their own ways seeks to find explanations and meanings for particular phenomena – a gift giving, a massacre and a rise in communal violence.

Sudeep Basu paper: The paper is an attempt to work out what could be termed a 'moral economy of the 'gift'' using the case of NRGs remittances and 'philanthropy' in Gujarat. What constitutes the 'publicness' of the collective remittances (cr) of this diaspora? How does CR transform the 'village'? The authors' well-crafted paper gives us a good sense of the 'social life of giving' in this context. His questions raise the related one of whether this philanthropy is a "giving back" by the NRI/G? Since the author refers to the anthropological literature on the gift, it would be useful to pursue the question a little more along the lines of what (if any) social relations are shaped by the dān? How are the relations constituted by the dan (as a way of producing relations of obligation)? What is the 'sin' that is being removed by dan? Another issue that could be pursued is the way in which such remittances reconfigure (or reproduce) caste relations and the ideas that underlie caste society. If the etymology of philanthropy is 'love of humans,' then caste reproduction surely contradicts that spirit. In this sense one could interrogate the possibility that what passes as philanthropy is not really so. A related notion to explore could be the notion of a 'fief' – how are villages chosen and if it is usually one's birth village than what does philanthropy do to the status of the giver and the relation between giver and 'his' (or her) village? Here the production of status (of the émigré individual and family) through producing a new attestation of (be)longing differs with the status of the NRI in an earlier period (as one who has forsaken the land). Some more empirical questions that the paper hints at but could pursue in more depth are: Do 'gifts' come for supplementing public schools? Or are they usually or overwhelmingly for setting up private schools? What does such giving mean in terms of ability to trust (and help build) existing institutions? How doe gifting in this manner further equity? In many ways, such philanthropy is a form of 'neoliberal giving' – it erode state legitimacy even more. Finally, the paper is part of a larger corpus of work that contributes to explicating the phenomenon of the 'global village' or transnationally built (materially and socially) village. How does the space of the village get reconfigured in this matrix of relations?

G. Chandraiah Paper: This paper is a bold attempt to construct a social scientific explanation of an event (Laxmipeta massacre in 2012). This massacre follows in the wake of a series of more well-known ones in the region. The author makes a very cogent analysis which shows how the capture of state power by dominant castes sets up the conditions for the killing of Dalits at the village level. The challenge here, however, is to explain why it did not happen in all the places (where it could have). The paper analyses the event much along the ways that Elster has set forth in his seminal work on explanation – that to explain an event is also to construct a series of historical events that lead up to the event in question. Here the 3 levels of analysis – all structural acc to the author - are excellent: the Dalit agrarian relations (Dalits acquiring land to become cultivators), the ooru-vada relations (where castes live next to each other but separated in clear ways) and the village-dam caste contradictions (new party formation for consolidation of dominant caste; Dalit sarpanch; rehabilitation and land compensation sought with increase in everyday conflict). The author further explores how a Kapu leader engineered a social boycott of Dalits which created a context for viewing Dalits as 'enemy of the village.' The challenge for the author is of course: has this analysis

really *explained* the massacre? For example, reconstructing the structural conditions by itself does not explain the event. One needs to link the ‘macro’ structure to the ‘micro’ conjuncture. For the latter to be part of the explanation we need to identify the social processes in the village (and outside) that makes the cultural consensus possible (viewing Dalits as less than humans and the enemy), the process of mobilization of a group of people (including women and children perhaps) to commit the act in the early hours of that day, and the process which keeps the police at bay for just the time needed to perpetrate the massacre. Why and how did these micro-level processes come to be? Related questions that the author touched upon and which bear some further explorations (at least with a view to understanding what could be a hurdle to such massacres in the future) are the questions of state functionaries who are Dalit (is there representation without empowerment or is there a culture of police and bureaucracy that trumps such possibilities?) and the Dalit movement (what is needed to enable it to act as a bulwark to prevent such happenings rather than only respond later)? None of these are easy questions. But the aim of this paper (if understood correctly) is nothing short of finding an explanation for a complex event with a view to ending it. It would be remiss if there was no comment on one last point. It is impossible to exaggerate the significance of such an effort as the author’s – caste massacres cannot be coolly and dispassionately dissected by social scientists. Yet the author has managed to put in place a very concise and potentially powerful method of analysis.

Satendra Kumar paper: This paper identifies a very troubling phenomenon (is it new?) – the existence (or coming into being) of communal violence in rural India. Using long-term ethnographic data, the author constructs a narrative about the ways in which a new sociality has been constituted in rural western UP along with a clear change in agrarian relations. Many of the key actors in this narrative have significant links and live outside the village (more than within the village) and this results in material changes as well as changed social relations (via status building, delinking from productive relations and relations of dependency or interdependency). Both Jats and Muslims are shown to simultaneously have a different construction of their own communal identities (e.g., as a ‘good Muslim’ and a ‘good Hindu’) via participation in new rituals (mata ka jagran, television programs, go rakshak) and some assertion by Muslims through symbols that are viewed as defying their traditional lower status. The vignettes are very rich and could be explored further. What, for example, are the ways in which any social institution exists in rural western UP which creates a space for interaction across and between such groups? Do such institutional space simply not exist (cf. Varshney about lack of secular or multicomunity institutions)? There is a tragic irony to the narrative which could be usefully developed – since the onset of a form of status equality (Muslim status has seemingly improved) brings with it a form of increased volatility and conflict possibility, what does the concept of ‘tolerance’ mean in such a context if not to condemn society to accept a view of peace as simply an absence of conflict (and hence status inequities)? The concept of ‘tolerance’ here could be significantly critiqued in this sense with such ethnographic accounting and analysis. A related line of interrogation could be the creation and reproduction of everyday forms of imagined communities that use a notion of sacred (and secular) geographies to attest and assert belongingness. If Shamshul valorizes the buildings of Dubai (over the American empire and the ‘achievements’ of the West), it is in an attempt to locate himself in a competing geographically constructed community. The contextual challenge is how this becomes antagonistic to the Jat construction of a Hindu geography, and how all this changes the sense of identification with local spaces (be it village or town).

Q&A Session

To Sudeep Basu: Enquiry about the seeming tension between the picture of remittances coming in and nationalist feelings reigning supreme on the one hand and use of the phrase ‘denigration of NRI intentions’ on the other. Several participants remarked on the question – ‘who do we represent?’ that the author raised in his paper, asking if this is a question the author is raising or is it being raised by the subjects on the ground? If donor classes are disaggregated will we not get a sense of what they are donating for and what is their imagination of the village?

To Chandraiah: A number of people remarked on the question of dalit representation within the bureaucracy and ability to stop such incidents. Preeti Sampat suggested that enquiring about the disabling effects within the state could be one way of taking this enquiry forward. Suraj Jacob enquired about what was happening in the other 6 villages where displacement due to the dam happened. Geetika De suggested that a possible answer to the question of dalit representation in bureaucracy might be found through a consideration of Arendt’s argument in ‘The Banality of Evil’. Vijay Baskar asked if it was possible for dalits to pitch one dominant caste against another given that they are in competition with one another trying to capture state power.

To Satendra Kumar: Preeti Sampat asked how the complexity being presented is being framed. Satish Deshpande highlighted the conjunction between caste and community. He asked what would happen in the case of the lower caste who are also Hindu and express a heightened sense of religiosity? What would happen to their challenge to the dominant caste? He remarked that this would help us net out the community (Muslim) part of the story and to arrive at the caste part or vice-versa.

Responses

Sudeep Ghosh: The denigration and loathing are being expressed by the non-patidars who are local contenders to patidars. The question who do we represent is being raised by the author and finds expression within the community as well. The village keeps getting represented to others outside and thus draws the symbolic and material investment of locals and migrants for whom this representation is value loaded.

Chandraiah: Public spaces become crucial domain where contestation plays out because caste is something that is significantly experienced in public. The relatively free congregations of dalit youth around an Ambedkar statue played a part in the Kapus getting enraged in Laxmipeta. Chandraiah mentioned that he plans to visit the surrounding villages soon and stated that the dalits have a legal claim to the 250 acres of land most of which the Kapus are cultivating illegally. On the questions regarding dalit representation in bureaucracy Chandraiah said that it’s a question of whether the dalits are ready to challenge the ideological state apparatus. He mentioned that on the ground a dalit bahujan project becomes very complex and there isn’t a movement on the ground that brings these forces together.

Satendra Kumar: Stated that his interest is in exploring how agrarian change is providing grounds for communalization and what kind of socialities are being produced by the ‘desettling’ of the relations between farmer-labour/artisan. On the question of lower caste assertion he remarked that any group trying to assert its presence in the public sphere potentially becomes the other of the dominant caste. Such assertions around public spaces and how they are countered is the terrain on which dominance

plays out and is reinforced. He gave the example of the maintenance of the idea that Western UP is controlled by the Jats.

Ashish Saxena, University of Allahabad

Probing the Notion of Indian Village Studies in the Transforming Village India: A Critique

In this paper Ashish Saxena tries to critique the received understanding of the village in India. He does so by drawing upon enquiries of change based in two field sites – study of land reforms and agrarian change in villages in Jammu district and study of jajmani systems and social relations in villages in Eastern UP (near Allahabad). The observations from Jammu are based on fieldwork in three villages and the focus is on seeing the relationship of caste to agrarian change. In Udhampur agricultural practices are not well developed and the dominant Rajputs control large parts of the fertile land while the lower castes have, if at all, less fertile holdings. Untouchability here is evidently manifest. In Kathua village agriculture has lesser prominence and it is its proximity to Jammu town that has been crucial to changes in it. Given its proximity, the lower castes could get educated while the Rajputs maintained their control over land. This has given rise to social tensions in the village. In the third village (RS Pura) the caste equation has been influenced by land redistribution in favour of the lower castes. This has led to them being assertive, though instances of Jajmani can still be found. The author highlights a few historical factors that need to be borne in mind while thinking about caste relations in J&K. Firstly, that the state has a better track record vis-à-vis others on land reform. Second, the erstwhile ruler worked against the ban on temple entry of lower castes and his wife worked towards encouraging the acquisition of education by the lower caste groups. Lastly, the influence of the Arya Samaj in the region that has resulted in several upper caste associations working towards the uplift of the lower caste groups. These historical factors, the author argues, take away from the harshness of the caste situation and also explains why we haven't witnessed strong dalit assertions here. In Udhampur and Kathua it is also the case that the issue of India-Pakistan tension and cross border infiltration dilutes the caste conflict.

The author then presented a sketch of change from field studies in villages from Allahabad, Jaunpur, Gorakhpur and Azamgarh. Some of the main points highlighted were as follows. Despite the separation of residential hamlets there is noticeable intermixing of castes. A sizeable presence of Muslims animates the village dynamics such that there is plenty of intermixing between them and the lower castes. It also leads to discomforts arising sometimes such as wedding processions having to pass through the hamlet of butchers. The author points out that notions of purity and pollution are on the wane and gives the example of electoral politics where the upper castes do not mind factions among themselves in order to woo lower caste voters. He underscores the point that the conflict now is between the OBCs and dalits, not between upper and lower castes. High incidence of corruption at the local level (panchayat) is something that shapes the situation. New forms of agitations are noticeable such as what are called the new farmers movements.

Shelley Feldman, Cornell University, USA

What can village studies learn from border studies? Recuperating border analysis in the midst of large-scale population movements

Shelley Feldman's presentation was conceptual in nature and sought to pick up on themes touched upon by the other papers and build on them by using insights from her interest in the field of border studies. Some of the main themes in her paper were the following.

Porousness of boundaries, empiricism and positivism: One of the criticisms of village studies is that it has reified the category of the village, which is the legacy of the imperial project. The practice of studying the village through fixed indicators ends up assuming aspects of what is being studied. Similarly trying to understand change over time by looking at such indicators is problematic. In a sense positivism besets the exercise and doesn't allow for the subject to define itself. Empiricism becomes a device through which the researcher keeps herself out what is being studied. The attempt should rather be to understand and express the embeddedness of the researcher in the field of study. She follows her critique of village studies that it uses binaries of rural/urban, macro/micro to create its object of enquiry with the suggestion that the idea of porousness (not only of geographic boundaries but also of categories of thought) taken from the field of border studies can be usefully applied to overcome this difficulty.

A sensitivity to historical embeddedness will allow one to not see things as being similar across time and being formulated anew. The idea of reproduction is important here because it allows us to think against the idea that the same thing is being studied at two different points in time, by having built into it the conception that things are changing while being reproduced. So it is not the same 'village' that is being reproduced that one can study through a set of indicators that were used earlier, but a new entity altogether that has been arrived at through the process of reproduction. The practice of studying the same village by revisiting it can do with a dose of reflexivity with regard to the notion of temporality and reproduction.

Shelley Feldman remarked on the use of the idea of continuum that was used in the concept note of the conference. Rather than imagining continuum as emerging from the binary of rural and urban the effort could be to look at things in terms of porosities thereby doing away with framing objects through the use of such binaries or dichotomies.

Suraj Jacob, Balmurli Natrajan and Indira Patil, APU, Bangalore

Explaining village level development practices through schooling in Karnataka

This paper was based on observations from three villages in Shorapur taluk in Yadgir district in northeast Karnataka (which is known to be a backward area in the state according to standard development indicators) where the researchers try to understand and explain change overtime. By looking at what can be understood from changes at the village level, the researchers' interest is in what they can understand about larger more macro changes.

The paper tries to grapple with two challenges that are present in the existing literature:

1. The macro-micro relationship – how do we understand a macro change at a village level by looking at the micro level?
2. Spatial Variability – taking micro level spatial variability seriously in an attempt to eventually scale up.

For the study three villages were selected through purposive sampling that had almost same literacy rate according to 2001 census (about 5%). In Chennuru (Kannada meaning: the good village) female literacy went from 5% to 40% in a span of ten years while in the other two it remained largely the same. Given the marked similarity (geographical/topographical, social context) among the villages, the question was to explain the difference in change over the same time.

The researchers follow a mixed method approach where they employ a quantitative way of choosing the units of study and a qualitative way of constructing explanations which they then reinforce using

quantitative methods. The researchers identify two mechanisms of change (livelihood and social cooperation) that help explain the differential outcome in the three villages with regard to change in the rate of female literacy. They construct a narrative account for the three villages through which the salience of these two mechanisms is highlighted.

A common point in the narrative of the three villages is the construction of a dam nearby and the researchers highlight its differential impact vis-à-vis livelihood in the respective villages. While Chennuru received continuous irrigation water and people there could shift from agricultural labour to cultivating two crops, it resulted in an increase in incomes and this is linked qualitatively and statistically to the decision by families to send their girls to school. The researchers also point to the history of having worked together in groups outside the village as providing the basis for strong inter-group relations that allowed social cooperation to prevail in this village. In the case of Valasuru (Kannada: migration village), with the eventual reduction of water supply the villagers had to shift from cultivating two crops to one crop only. This led to a search for alternative livelihood options, with shepherding (an earlier existing livelihood) now not possible due to grazing fields being used for cultivation. Eventually people started migrating out to work in Bangalore and this had a negative impact on female literacy as elder girls were left behind to take care of the households while younger ones were taken along to look after their younger siblings in the city. In the case of Badaduru (Kannada: conflict village) the water from the dam never reached the village and residents could only cultivate the less remunerative non-paddy crops. Social cooperation was lacking in this village and is explained by the researchers through two events – the first being a love affair between an anganwadi worker (a Lingayat woman from outside the village) and a local Nayaka leader, and second the perception of corruption regarding the school where the Nayaka leader had influence. This created distrust between the different communities and had a negative impact so much so that people who could afford the schooling of their children decided to send them outside the village but not to the school in the village.

The two mechanisms together explain the change in Chennuru, which had both; Valasuru did not have the livelihood mechanism work for it and Banaduru did not have the social cooperation mechanism that undermined education.

Discussant's Remarks: A.R. Vasavi, Independent Scholar

Vasavi highlighted several points in keeping with the theme of the session (the remaking of village India), some of which were brought out in the different papers that were presented. Stressing on looking at things beyond agriculture she pointed out the importance of understanding the role education is playing in the transformations underway. Given the diversification of household incomes the importance of trying to comprehend the dynamics of migration and was stressed. At the same time there is a need to study the new complex forms of patriarchy. The family can be studied as a site that encapsulates many of these pressures. There is a need to qualify the rendering of the state as simply being neoliberal and also to think whether regional differences are growing or is there greater convergence. Several processes exhibit a dual character, of reproduction as well as rupture, which needs to be accounted for. The mediatisation of rural society and the significant role of religious organisations require greater focus.

Commenting on Ashish Saxena's paper Vasavi said that it would have been very important if the case of J&K was further elaborated as it is an under studied region. The impact of the securitization paradigm and of article 370 could have been explored further. Also she raised a concern regarding

the author's view of a lack of caste based tensions and enquired about the presence of caste among Muslims.

Taking cue from Shelley Feldman's caveat against reifying categories, the APU research team was posed with the question whether they were reifying the category of literacy? "Has the category been made to stand in for development?" It was pointed out that increase in female literacy is often linked with deskilling and women being pushed indoors and not being allowed to contribute economically. The paper was criticized for not engaging with broader areas of study and generalizing too much on the basis of preliminary fieldwork. Commenting on the idea of continuum it was said that perhaps a shift in orientation, from looking for causal factors to exploring the complexity of the phenomenon, needs to be taken seriously.

Q&A Session

To Ashish Saxena: Professor Deshpande, reiterating the exclusion of lower caste perspectives in village studies, asked for a clarification if what is being argued is whether village studies should be different today or that they should have been different in the past.

To Shelley Feldman: Sharib Zeya pointed to the idea of liminality associated with thinking about borders. He also asked if we are looking at dichotomies (village/city) then how are we to think of transgressions. Sudeep Ghosh commented on the idea of non-liminality stressing how village structures around borders are different from those in other areas. Vijayshankar commented on the usefulness of village studies.

For APU team: A number of people raised the question of representation and the discomfort with the value-loaded naming of villages. A comment on the need to account for the politics of dam formation and canal mapping was raised and it was asked if the researchers were missing out on how social cooperation was being expressed (given their exclusive concern with schooling). Also raised was the point about looking at more than just two processes to draw a linkage between micro and macro changes. A question was also raised about how one deals with variability that is dependent on contingency when trying to understand development processes.

Responses

Ashish Saxena: He stressed that his focus was on the Jammu region only and not J&K as a whole. He mentioned that owing primarily due to security reasons there were problems in land use that caused productivity to remain low despite the successful land reforms. Responding to Professor Deshpande, Ashish Saxena stated that he was critical of the earlier village studies and was arguing for a new approach to studying villages today.

Shelley Feldman: Stated that she is not disapproving of historical studies and finds them useful, but is asking for more reflexivity in the interpretations that are made in such studies. Responding to comments on the idea of continuum, she argued that continuum implies lines and directions. Opening them up could bring in more skepticism, which is useful. Village and cities are different, but how we separate taking over of villages by corporations, how we speak of temporalities, cultures, is not enabled by the concept of continuum – it is in fact limiting. She drew a parallel with the macro-micro conceptual models which is again limiting because things happen in a given space and time. The micro-macro, internal-external divide does not enable that contextual understanding; these are positivist models that we still seem to be carrying.

Suraj Jacob (APU): Accepted the problem with naming but clarified that they employed the names as descriptive terms not otherwise. To the charge of reification of categories, he said that they were using literacy as a starting point in trying to eventually look at schooling more broadly. He stated their methodological stance as looking at simple empirical puzzles, and trying to construct explanations of wider change. He mentioned that what is at stake in the disagreements are epistemological concerns where some might find such an approach to be too positivist.

Balmurli Natarajan (APU): There are bound to be methodological/epistemological issues in multi-disciplinary attempts. The point of the study was not to look at literacy or schooling or dams, or to state that social cooperation and literacy are linked (which appears to be an obvious linkage), but to show 'how' that is that case. Responding to the critique on charges of being too positivist he raised a question in the reverse: given all the criticism of positivism, is it possible to ask if there is anything positive about positivism? He raised concern over the grounds on which to take a call on the grand statement that anthropology is a science in search of meanings (not explanations).

Satish Deshpande brought the session to a close by flagging two issues. He stressed that institutional issues have a lasting impact on the way enquiries get constructed and given the disciplinary history of sociology and anthropology in India and globally, village studies provided an anchor. Responding to the discussion on continuum he asked – what if we think of 'the village' as a part of what is not village, that is city or town in particular. And that is in crisis today. The loss of transition narratives in which we had faith. Part of the job of the village was to remain contained and different in meaning from the city. Now it is not doing that job. So how do we think about the useful conceptual containers?

Panel IV: Faultlines: Emerging Contestations On Land, Water And Forests

Chair: Prof. Pradeep Bhargava, Director, GBPSSI

Preeti Sampat, University of Delhi

India's Land Impasse and the Growing 'Rentier' Economy

Preeti Sampat presented a conceptual paper using her empirical work on the upcoming Dholera Smart City along the Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC). She began her presentation by detailing facts about the region, local political economy, the smart city project and configurations of resistance. Dholera is a planned special investment region along the Gulf of Khambhat, between Ahmedabad and Bhavnagar in Gujarat. The smart city is envisioned as a futuristic zone, with features such as walk-to-work culture, e-governance and IT technology promoting industries. The Dholera SIR will acquire land from 22 villages and impact 39,300 people. Although the land is officially recorded as barren, Sampat pointed out that it hosted an economy of rainfed wheat, cotton, cumin, jwar, milk cooperatives run by the Maldhari and Bharwar communities and off-farm activities such as diamond polishing.

She also outlined the key difference between this project and others that involve land acquisition, since the legal instrument being used in this case was the 'land pooling' provision under the Gujarat Town Planning and Urban Development Act, 1976. Unlike the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Relief and Rehabilitation Act, 2013 (RFCTLARR), the mechanism of land pooling does not contain provisions to establish consent or ensure participation for the project affected families. The compensation provisions of RFCTLARR are not applicable in the case of land pooling since the ownership status of the land doesn't change, even though land use will be changed. According to Sampat, the Dholera Development Plan envisages that 50% of the land of individual farmers will be acquired for the smart city and compensated by the market value, while the remaining half will be given back to farmers as developed plots. The costs of infrastructure on the developed plots will be borne by farmers, and these plots are located on land near the coast, which remains submerged under water for large parts of the year. The Gujarat High Court has ordered a stay on the process of land pooling.

Sampat then used her ethnographic fieldwork to highlight the resistance of villagers to this project. Project affected villagers are sceptical about the quality of jobs that they'll get in the smart city, given their low levels of literacy and incommensurability of skills. Instead of the smart city, farmers want the water from the Narmada canal to irrigate their fields and enhance farm productivity, as was promised to them when the dam was being built. Villagers also gain strength from the fact that the erstwhile chief minister of Gujarat, Narendra Modi, had to cancel the notification for a similar plan of land acquisition for 36 villages for the Mandal-Becharaji Special Investment Region in the face of resistance in 2013. Sampat characterised the present situation as a 'land impasse', which is an impasse not just for capital, but also an historical impasse for progressive politics. According to her, the dialectic was between land grabs, resistance and the production of this impasse. She ended her presentation by highlighting the nature of a rentier economy (involving land markets, real estate agents, state actors and big farmers) that arises out of this kind of land acquisition. The Dholera development plan mentions how land owners have to be trained to do commerce in land, participate in land markets. The plan incorporates the political and economic calculations of increasing rent as part of economic growth. She questioned the politics of work engendered by this developing rentier

economy, where individuals formerly occupied as agriculturists could now eschew work and enjoy rental incomes.

Geetika De, University of Delhi

Interrogating the Land Acquisition Question in Contemporary India through the Prism of Property, Law & Rights

Geetika De started her presentation by highlighting the materiality of land relations, and the multiple nature of land as property and as benefactor for public goods. She pointed out that there were diverse interests in land, ideological, customary and material. There are competing social, political and ideological contexts of property in land and land as property. De cited Ranajit Guha's work, which demonstrated that the Permanent Settlement of Bengal was the first step for instituting private property in land by the colonial rulers. Colonial law made land alienable and saleable. Usha Ramanathan's work shows that similar fraud was done against tribals in case of forest land. She further quoted Susan Reynolds' work on the history of eminent domain to argue that rights in land need to be analysed by separating the bundles of rights that are taken for granted in different societies into specific rights and obligations. The legal consent required in the case of land alienation creates a standard grid out of complex, illegible social practices, which does not take this into account. In this context, Rekha Bandyopadhyay's work has shown that large landholders controlled most of the land rights in the village, and Nivedita Menon has wondered whether the feminist practice of bringing individual women within the frame of individual property rights might need to be re-visited because of massive land acquisition going on in the country.

De highlighted the continuities as well as divergences between the Land Acquisition Act 1894 in places like colonial Calcutta (quoting Debjani Bhattacharya's work) and the process of land acquisition in independent India. She argued that land is a state subject because of the local, embedded nature of land. A central land acquisition law is unpalatable for states because of their diverse histories (Dhanmanjari Sathe's work). The consent clause in the RFCTLARR remains a vexed question. It is a function of patronage networks, landlords, local notables and dominant leaders. The Gram Sabha is a site of social contradictions and hierarchical agrarian property relations, and consent for land alienation must be understood in this context. Hence, in the question of rights, there is a need to disaggregate the category of the farmer. De ended her presentation by claiming that there was a contestation between what the law purports to do and the limits what the law can do. When we talk about the three terms of discourse – property, law and rights – it can be seen that there are limits to the law itself. It purports to be something, but it can be read in multiple ways.

Sujit Kumar, Institute for Social and Economic Change, Bangalore

Shifting modalities of anti-dispossession resistance movements in West Singhbhum, Jharkhand

Sujit Kumar's presentation focused on the emergence of resistance movements against land acquisition in localities and regions that weren't so popular and well known as some of the bigger anti-displacement movements in the country. His case study focused on the struggles of Zameen Bachao Samanvay Samiti (ZBSS) against a proposed sponge iron industry in West Singhbhum, Jharkhand. Sujit Kumar cited the work of theorists like D.L. Sheth and Karl Polanyi to contextualize the resistance movements against land acquisition in the era of globalization and capitalist transformations. He reflected on the nature and politics of resistance movements, especially those

that decided to collaborate with umbrella organisations like National Alliance for People's Movements (NAPM). He argued that many movements allied with the NAPM, not because they were ideologically aligned with them but because they wished to leverage their association.

Sujit Kumar's work looks at the leadership of resistance movements. He used the Gramscian idea of organic intellectuals and Samir Amin's category of public intellectuals to differentiate between different kinds of leaders. In the case of ZBSS, the leadership is of local tribal intellectuals. Although there are non-tribals in the villages that are affected by the proposed sponge iron plant, the movement is mostly led and participated by the tribals. He pointed out that ZBSS used the Ho identity of affected villagers to make appeals. The organisation was not drawn to urban-based non-tribal activists because they didn't want to be on larger political platforms, and they have good associations with local political parties.

Sujit Kumar also listed the limitations of organisations like the ZBSS. There is a limited presence of non-tribals in such organisations. They did not raise issues like the detribalization of Jharkhand. He concluded his presentation with suggestions for umbrella organisations like NAPM, who could be more sensitive while articulating notions of Adivasi identity, local notions of self. City-based activists also need to deconstruct the process of disguised dispossession.

Sharib Zeya, Delhi School of Economics, Delhi

On Ownership of Land: Rethinking state and land policies in Bihar

Sharib began his presentation by illustrating the public trust doctrine of law, as evinced by legal and judicial pronouncements in the 2G spectrum case, the Illinois central railroad company vs. the people of Illinois, and article 39(b) of the Indian Constitution. Sharib pointed out that the doctrine served resource management problems, and contrasted it with the state's claim of eminent domain i.e. all land within the state boundary which is not private is owned by the state. The acquisition of such public lands did not fall within the purview of laws that governed private land acquisition, and the state does not have to obtain consent of those dependent on the land or pay compensation to them.

Sharib drew his empirical arguments from the case of chaur and diara lands in Bihar, land which emerge when the river changes its course and which remain submerged during the monsoon season. These lands are non-transferable and usable, and hence their ownership is both public and private in nature. In the Patna High court judgment of Chandrabanshi Singh vs The State of Bihar & Ors, the court reprimanded the government. The case was about land on which the plaintiff was settled for eighty years. The state stopped receiving revenue from the plaintiffs and sought to dispossess the petitioners from the diara lands. The court accepted the fact that the state had done wrong to the petitioner.

Sharib argued that the trusteeship regime restricted the state's claim towards the land. Public trust doctrine places obligations on the state, which gives rise to expectations. It involves a commitment to evolutionary rather than revolutionary changes. In the case of diara lands, there was an obscurity of the role of the state as owner or trustee. He concluded by giving the example of the case Ram Ran Vijay Prasad Sinha vs. State of Bihar, where the state was trying to subvert private ownership of land.

Discussant's Remarks: Rajeswari Raina, NISTADS, Delhi

Rajeswari Raina identified four major categories that were common to all the presentations: state, natural resources, law, and individuals and communities. The four papers questioned the rules, norms and values that are taken-for-granted in the mainstream obsession for economic growth. She remarked that Preeti Sampat's paper on historical impasse was full of hope; hope of resolving the impasse. She commented on the written paper submitted by Preeti Sampat (which was not fully read out in her presentation), which compared the success of the anti-SEZ movement in Goa, and the invisibility of the resistance offered by pastoral communities in semi-arid Dholera. While discussing Sujit. Kumar's paper, she sought comments on the ways in which leaders of ZBSS have emerged as organic intellectuals. She asked Sujit Kumar to elaborate on their methods of validation apart from their social identity and their conceptual understanding of issues in development and displacement. She observed that Gitika De's paper interrogated the consent of the majority that is now required in land acquisition cases. The fuzziness about formal law and its engagement with customary rights, community knowledge, local ownerships, the desperation about configuring the law, and questions about what a "just compensation" means, were all being articulated today.

In her discussion, Rajeswari Raina tried to problematize the understanding of the state as undifferentiated, supreme and sovereign. She cited Pranab Bardhan to observe that the state is constituted by and for the rich peasantry, industry and bureaucratic classes. More detailed research was required about the nature of the state, and its articulation of what it always supplies to the people – technical skills, productivity enhancing investments, roads etc. Rajeswari Raina called for drawing on Polanyi's understanding of land as a fictitious commodity to bear upon the present situation, and how we understand the commodification of natural resources. Reflecting on Sharib's paper, she wondered about the possibilities that arose from the state's role as a trustee and as owner. She argued that if earning rental incomes defined a resource, then we needed to think about who are the rentiers and how do they gain from the rent. The case of diara lands was an example that resources were flexible and fungible, and that commodification allowed a complete destruction of natural resources.

She concluded her discussion with the two categories of individuals and communities. According to the report of the MS Swaminathan committee, farmers wish to leave agriculture and the youth are told that this is a devalued or undervalued sector. Individual compensation based on commodification of land will never be commensurate with the collective community norms and valuations of land and this does not bother the state. Hence, it can be seen that the law and legal apparatus don't enable just compensation in the process of commodification and alienation of resources. Our role as a community of researchers is also to be discussed against the demand (in three of these papers) for engagement with the "organic intellectuals"- in their contexts, using their assumptions and being part of their epistemic community.

Responses

Preeti: Goa has had a much older history of social movements, the Konkan railway agitation, the DuPont agitation etc. This explains how resistance has become a part of repertoire of public life. The role of social movement histories in explaining the success of the anti-SEZ movement in Goa is undeniable. In case of Dholera, it is the state which is claiming that there's no opposition on the ground; and what exists on the ground is made invisible by the state.

Geetika: The Gram Sabha is treated as a juridical entity whereas we know that there are power and relationships of domination in actual Gram Sabhas. The state's role in establishing public purpose is often that it works through obfuscations and mystifications. The state is certainly not undifferentiated. Balagopal's study of Scheduled Areas in Andhra Pradesh can be taken as an example. The specific roles played by local bureaucrats and hierarchies in state functions indicate that there is no public law perspective of these issues, and no legal education for the publics.

Sujit: Organic intellectuals of ZBSS want better education and health infrastructure/ outcomes for the Adivasis. They articulate their demands in terms of Constitutional provisions. They are also trying to stop Adivasis from drinking alcohol and attempt to reform them. The political discourse of Jharkhand is framed by Adivasi elite who articulate a particular kind of identity politics. Activists also try to use this notion of Adivasi identity. There's the example of Salkhan Murmu who is advocating for the retention of the Chhotanagpur Tenancy Act.

Sharib: There's an obscurity in both the roles of the state – as an owner and a trustee. These obscurities are so difficult to understand for us. When slavery was abolished in the US, there were a lot of cases in the courts for compensation for loss of property. The 2G spectrum case in the Supreme Court shows us the way of understanding the role of state vis-à-vis natural resources.

Q & A Session

Usman: What purchase does the concept of dialectic give us in understanding the land impasse? Marx was interested in the dialectic between capital and labour because he was interested in understanding the industrial society. But in Third World countries, we must also consider the dialectic between capital and natural resources, similar to the case of oil wealth in Venezuela, as shown in Fernando Coronil's work, *The Magical State*. The silencing of land from Marxist dialectic has meant that the relationship between land and livelihoods has not been understood in the Third World. There's a dialectical relationship between land and capital as well, and the creation of an impasse.

Prof. Pradeep Bhargava [Chairperson]: History teaches us a lot. There are cobwebs of law, state, individuals and communities. Many things have happened across the world, how do we make sense of it, where do we go from here? It is quite complex. The state keeps changing and modifying laws. We are living in multiple worlds.

Roundtable discussion: Research and Pedagogy for Rural and Agrarian Studies

The session began with Rajeswari Raina talking about the vision of NRAS to work with academics, farmers, civil society organisations, state, etc to take forward ways of research and pedagogy on agrarian and rural studies. The effort also is sharpen research questions, to move away from the issues of redundancy. In order to do this and to think of new ways of doing research and teaching, she invited Dr KJS Satyasai, NABARD, who was involved with the research department. The policy presently at NABARD is to fund thematic in research.

Before Satyasai started his discussion, Vrijendra, an activist from western UP put forward some of his observations about the preceding sessions. With reference to Chandriah's paper earlier in the day, which was based on caste massacres in Andhra Pradesh, he argued that in many instances of organised violence, women and children are put forward in order to escape legal and punitive action- something that was observed in Andhra Pradesh and also in western UP. While reflecting on Satendra's paper on shifting identities in western UP, he raised the point of radicalisation of religious identities, which forecloses the possibility of people being good. While material conditions might have improved for Muslim families that had men going off to the Gulf and earning, the social relations of hierarchy and patronage have not changed and they do not change so easily. In the case of land acquisition, the state took away land gave compensation in one stroke. The instabilities it has caused at a social level are immense. State has not taken that into account. He made a correlation between caste and class status. Only the terms of reference are that of caste in rural areas and class in urban areas.

Raising the incident of mob lynching of an elderly man, Mohammed Akhlaq in Bisara village, Dadri, on charges of possessing beef, he argued that the upward mobility of the family which was resented by the dominant communities in the village was the root of the violence meted out to him. This too has roots in caste and the framework of caste hierarchy and violence cuts across classes and religions. Changes in the economy have social impacts. A similar incident was avoided in Chithhera where there was a rumour of cow slaughter. Vrijendra spoke about how his group of activists got together to avoid any imminent violence. Since it was people from his own community who were about to engage in violence, being prevented by members of their community was effective. If caste does not fight against caste, the social instabilities brought about by land acquisition cannot be overcome. This is the context in which middle castes support upper castes and do not align with lower castes; it is a question of group interest. This power dynamic has also been utilised when Dalits have tried to enter cultivation. In another incident, when a Dalit official tried to investigate a matter of violence towards Dalits in a village the local cops refused to carry out the investigation because they were from the dominant community. In this manner, state systems are also entrenched in local caste relations.

He also reiterated the point of inter-relational nature of changes even as processes in every region are specific, something that came out of Prof Feldman's paper. If this can be understood well, incidents of violence can be contained. The illegality of state, as brought out by Preeti Sampat's paper was brought out. Also that state works for profit, also revealed in the manner in which costs are transferred with minimal compensation to those whose land is acquired. Reflecting on Sujit Kumar's paper on organic leaders, Vrijendra argued that experience and grass-rootedness should not be valourised. It can even be dangerous. Intellectuals no matter where have to be more invested in change. Otherwise we are too close to a violent state. The loyalty of intellectuals is usually out in the open. Their proximity to the media and the powerful elite betrays their loyalty. A good way from here can be found if these discussions reach farmers who are distressed and their experiences are

shared and understood by people here (in such discussions). If there is a synergy between the two, things can be resolved.

Rajeswari pointed out that Vrijendra's comments set the tone for this session as it is trying to build a space for engagement, through research and teaching, to real life situations and issues.

Research:

In his discussion of research agendas, KJS Satyasai mentioned how the last NRAS conference in Bhopal focussed on the rural- on what is the rural? While people have argued the rural is beyond agriculture, in economics the focus is on the agrarian part. Non-farm sector is also examined sometimes, mostly for empirical purposes. Some studies have worked on this from livelihoods perspective. In more contemporary research, we should look at agriculture but along with its inter-linkages to other sectors. In research projects being conceived now, this should not be overlooked.

Something that comes up in discussions on agriculture, particularly in policy circles, is the fact of the share of agriculture in GDP decreasing while the dependence on it is increasing. It was also assumed that with development, the share of agriculture comes down and the share of the population dependent on agriculture comes down too. So this notion of development is in an imbalance in the case of India. Given this, pulling the labour force out of agriculture- remains an important question. NABARD mostly receives research that is quantitative and programme-evaluation, while sociological aspects are under researched. Social questions are in fact more rupture-inducing and are left behind. Uniformities and assumptions of quantitative research have to be challenged. People at higher level, people in power, must also be engaged in conversations of sociality. Interdisciplinarity is important for research and for programme designing.

Another crucial aspect that research should take up is that of subsidies: it is a persistent debate. He argued that time needs to be factored in when talking about this subject. In his experience, he said, subsidies don't reach those who need them, and fail the purpose. Some argue for dividing subsidies, this needs to be examined carefully. In the conference, some papers spoke of the state and its withdrawal, through schemes of literacy, health and more. The question of the state's role must be kept alive.

The question of livelihood enhancement and social cooperation came out through some papers (in the conference) and the social cooperation part there needs to be understood better through research. This is how the phenomenon of micro finance came to be conceived. Social cohesion was an important part of this imagination. Initially it was successful but seeking replications led to its failure, which also was a factor of impatience of authorities. And this is an aspect of all actors, authorities and people at local levels.

The role of centre and states has been a running theme in the discussions. It should not become a situation where neither states nor the centre hold responsibilities. Livelihood, poverty alleviation and food security should be the responsibility of both the centre and state governments. How PDS can be important for food security and sustainable growth could also be an important question for research. Even though food grain production has been good, hunger indices have been high. Distress and suicide go paradoxically with claims of good agriculture indices. Every suicide underscores the distress.

Percentage of small and marginal farmers has been increasing- how we need to organise them is important. Questions of their survival, food security, access to infrastructure/ credit, farm

productivity and ecological issues are important. Quick fix solutions have not worked; and organisations of farmers do not give all the answers. Marketing cooperatives had similarly failed in the past. This question is important to re-evaluate.

State-law-natural resources have overlaps and this nexus is crucial though we don't have many clues about it. Increasing production through external solutions (fertilizers, pesticides, HYV seeds, etc) did resolve some problems at one point in our agricultural history but created another set of problems like land degradation, management of water- these are questions that need attention. Those set of solutions did resolve the problem of food security to some extent. Therefore we need to think in a long term scale. Organic/ chemical production debates should be removed from rhetoric, emotions, etc. We should realistically ask if organic farming can feed us at the scale at which it is required to. On field its replicability is difficult. It is desirable but how can it be sustained is important.

Surplus and profit- returns from agriculture- for producers should be a part of our concern. Most farmers are faced with the inability to receive adequate returns while corporate giants get a free hand in claiming returns and influencing prices. Market may not be all positive but its support mechanisms should be made operative. Discussions on agriculture have centred around rural credit and indebtedness. Many of these debts are for purposes of health and education. Even one episode of illness can cause havoc for the farming family. Institutional credit has not been able to help with that, and this concern needs attention. The question of no education/ training for farmers is a soul-searching one. Farmers must be made skilled, learn financial management, and even have continuous/ life-long learning facilities. Insurance penetration is limited. These are some concerns which have been highlighted in the conference also and should become a part of research agenda.

Pedagogy:

Talking about the undergraduate agrarian sociology course in Delhi University, Ravindra Karnena began his discussion by highlighting the resistance to such a course in universities and therefore the importance of its survival. In the particular case of Delhi University, Ravindra acknowledged the support Prof Satish Deshpande and Prof Rajni Palriwala in getting the course passed through the boards.

The paper is one of agrarian sociology- both the agrarian and the sociological content are important. This design philosophy of a paper is important, and that is how it will be seen- as an artefact which has been designed for a particular purpose.

Syllabi need to be seen as a map, and the terrain it covers is of one's own making. It is really the terrain we define as teachers and then how we represent the issues. A syllabus should be open to interpretation but still with some limits- it does have a politics which does come through. There should be space for teachers and students to interpret the syllabus and mark some issues through it. Syllabus maker and teacher together do a double interpretation to render a coherent narrative. This presentation was initially made to design the undergraduate sociology course which is taught across ten colleges in Delhi University. This presentation aims at a minimum possible coherence that can be expected from this course as it is taught in different colleges.

A paper should enable a student to tell a story while giving some skills. First theme is agrarian societies and agrarian studies; the second is key issues/ perspectives, the third is themes in agrarian sociology in India, and the fourth agrarian futures.

1. The focus of this section is to make students aware of some broad ideas. Agricultural realities are important to human civilisation, which has to be established along with its social/ collective character. The inherent diversity of agricultural activities across time and space is also important to mark out. Agrarian studies is a discursive constitution which has social, economic, political and experiential aspects. And finally this section is also about how all this resonates in the South Asian context. It is important to communicate the empathy of this reality, so that they connect with this reality. Ultimately, it is important to have a grasp on this, as to how, being in agrarian societies, these are questions of life and death: that the world of agriculture is a world in itself. It should be possible to communicate how supply chains work in and outside agricultural (say, with industry) work. There were substantive themes which are introduced in this section which the class could come back to. In that sense, syllabus designing is like sowing seeds which would grow over the course.

Students from urban upbringing have to be made aware of agrarian realities; others who are from an agrarian background have to be given categories to understand their experience. The task is to make an ecosystem where they will think and contemplate on agrarian questions. At the minimum, a liberal concern with agrarian questions, to be able to follow some important issues in the sector, should be inculcated. It also important here to see how the object of enquiry- here, the agrarian, gets constituted. This section talks about continuity of agrarian discourse, with the state at the centre of it, and what it does to those who are farmers/ cultivators/ labourers. This course, by way of its critique, follows statist categories, and is not very empirical/ experiential.

2. The section on perspectives has three broad concerns: agrarian questions, moral economy, commodity perspectives. One of the concerns in teaching this section is how these are all versions of the agrarian reality, which have different concerns and all of these are aligned to political perspectives. These are evolving perspectives, are living debates, conversations. Students are attentive to contrasts and connections which should be emphasised. These can be drawn for them- and take them to authors/ texts they have already read. It is important to relate it to other courses they have been taught and present it all like a web and not stand-alone. Students are also receptive to this kind of connection making. This has to be understood from their locations also, for example students took commodity chains very seriously as it appeals to their sense of aspiration and possibility, revealing their class character. This also should be taken into account.
3. Themes in agrarian sociology in India: this essentially relates to agriculture and agrarian modernity. Its subsections are labour and agrarian class structure; markets, land reforms and green revolution; agrarian movements and caste, gender and agrarian realities. In terms of its blueprint, this section speaks directly to the concerns in agrarian studies and the ways in which we understand agrarian modernity- land, market, labour, state and technology. The first section deals with labour and agrarian class structure- historical nature of labour, how these categories are animated, why certain mobilisations are possible, etc. Then the section goes into more abstract debates like the 'Mode of Production' debate. From there the sub-theme of markets, land reforms and green revolution is raised- essentially bringing in the state and market.

Without overtly appealing to politics, empathy for the peasantry can be evoked, which becomes a sub-text of the course. In teaching Green Revolution, it has to be located in a long history of statist reforms and not be seen as a rupture. And then move to its consequences. In teaching agrarian movements, movements rather than peasant politics was kept as the theme of the section to keep alive the memory and capital of knowledge that movements have been. Caste and gender in agrarian

relations is then introduced in the course: gender through the category of labour which can then be taken to questions of land rights, etc and caste through Gail Omvedt's work to make caste central to agrarian realities. Through this section, at least the students can be given a window to the lived reality of oppression.

4. Agrarian future: this fourth section on futures opens up to the students the bleak present. The idea is to say nothing is arbitrary about the present crisis, something which has been systematic in many ways through the policy establishment and the global agrarian order. This is also important to open them up to more empirical readings. Other ideas like climate, global economy, etc were also there but could not be included. However the important objective was to enable them to use categories and think and talk about agrarian realities in a particular language. It is an agrarian sociology paper, and from the designer's perspective it has been modernist- useful, aesthetic and substantive. It is to serve as a cache of ideas that could be used through different and extended reading lists.

In terms of evaluation, internal evaluation has required summarising readings, or reviewing a monograph, to maintain a scrap book, ways in which thoughts into agrarian questions could be animated.

Q&A Session:

What are the alternative ways of engaging with rural societies and not just as 'us' researchers and 'them' subjects; but to learn from and with farming communities.

Satish Deshpande: course designing is one part, transacting them is the other side which is quite different. Courses have to be transacted and yet have their 'say'. Much of the time, it's important to maintain the concerns. In practical terms, one has to deal with the politics of courses, and give in ideas which might even be just wrong, but deal making is important. What really matters is examination; influence on them is difficult and having some influence there is difficult. It is important to remember that these will be transacted in complicated and less satisfactory way. Getting syllabi made and transacted is ambitious and needs energy.

Ravindra: this syllabus has become a model and it needs to be presented to others especially those who don't specialise in it. Evaluation was already floated, which goes with the rigour. The ambition is also that the course should unfold over the years and so should the evaluation. As teachers' capacities keep building, so should students' evaluation.

Questions/ comments: The course seems really reading centric. Would you like to shift it, make it more open ended? What kind of a profile of students do you have in your mind? Maybe there could be inclusion of other material, internet, movies, etc have to make the rural world come alive. In agrarian futures one could think of livelihoods and diversification - land use change, etc. beyond the farm, conservation, forest dwellers, etc. NABARD could think of this course as a summer school.

Ravindra: Designing a course has a context, all the booby traps are towards this context. For students it became a default course by default, a whole set of courses became so by default. One is thinking of an urban kid who is opened up to agrarian worlds, and someone with rural experience could learn categories to think through their experience. Diversity of class is something you have to mobilise to

transact something. Pedagogy is just that, where you use your circumstances. And the ultimate aim is to produce that liberal citizen, and that's the alchemy one has to mobilise.

Question: The readings are excellent; could they be seen as a starting point? How would students from rural background read these?

Comment: Standardised courses have difficulties, which have to be kept in mind, and also what will be kept out in a course.

Comment: Light reading courses become easy for students to not take seriously. When these courses are designed, how are the levels of BA MA etc thought of?

Ravindra: In terms of thinking of readings, the number of pages, etc are important factors. Readings should ignite imagination, that's more important.

Comment: Research agenda is along the divides of disciplines: most influential has been economics and other social sciences. We all should be aware of this in NRAS.

Comment: Discussions on non-rural, rural urban linkages could be seen as important for our research agenda.

Comment: NRAS possibly is trying to work along multiple disciplines- lot of economists are doing good work. Future research agenda should be thinking through this, taking from different disciplines. Especially with policy concerns this is important, notwithstanding the politics of it. Mixed methods are important and we should be open to that. Disciplinary lenses have to be seen with this porosity.

Comment: The field of commodities has been one of mixed methods and porosity of disciplines.

Comment: It is important to build a repository of syllabi which could be used for research: list of books and readings, which could be shared on the website.

Comment: Agrarian sociology has strong sociological moorings, and then adds on materials. If it was to be done differently, where would you begin? It could be Atharva Ved, Buddhist texts, history of Indian agriculture, Bhatt ki kahavate, 1857 as a peasant rebellion, *Godaan* as a text could be the bases for new research designs. What money has brought to agriculture, commodities, people's discourse, poetry, things that are not rooted in tradition, etc can also be issues.

Comment: Another important research and pedagogical agenda should be curriculum handbook on livelihoods, livelihoods education, and having this dialogue not just with academics but from practitioners.

Comment: Also reading material in Indian languages have to be built as a resource. One could begin with translatable material, see different lists, start collecting such material.

Comment: We could also include practical case studies, perspectives used by practitioners, etc.

Ravindra: Another thing is press archives that are being digitised, being kept for people on the internet. Periodicals have been mapping agriculture and other issues. Also languages that are being marginalised have to be revived.

Original Concept Note with Sub-Themes

The main aim of this conference is to generate critical debate and knowledge on the condition of agriculture and the “rural” in contemporary India. It also aims to provide a platform to motivate and mentor young researchers, in small towns and cities, who lack resources to carry out research on various aspects of agrarian and rural India. This is the 4th initiative in this direction by the Network of Rural and Agrarian Studies (NRAS). This conference looks at the specific transformations and transitions in agriculture, agrarian relations and the “rural” in India over the last few decades, which have been arguably deeply problematic for concerns of equity, justice and sustainable development. The third NRAS conference held at Bhopal in 2014 highlighted a fundamental problem with the notion of “rural” India that does not take into account the ways in which the “rural” is fundamentally shaped by and constituted by the discourses, policies and material relations with the Indian state, “urban” space, and industry. Indeed, all conventional dichotomies such as rural/urban, agriculture/industry, traditional/modern and countryside/city are inadequate to grasp the transformations underway.

This year's conference will advance the insights from last year and examine five critical topics around the nature, processes, magnitude and outcomes of the transformations and transitions in “rural” India. These topics occupy a central place in any narrative about what is happening to / in “rural” India and the prospects, possibilities and challenges of any positive social transformation.

1. Village India in the 21st century: Class, Caste and Gender Relations
2. Agriculture, Agrarian relations and Labour
3. Capital, Markets and the “New Economy”: The Urban-Rural Continuum
4. Fault-Lines: Emerging Contestations on Land, Water and Forests
5. Education, Mobility and Aspirations in Rural India

PANEL 1: Village India in the 21st Century: Class, Caste and Gender Relations

This inaugural session will provide a historical overview of how the study of the village, the rural, and the agriculture has been conducted in the past by various disciplines and what is our state of knowledge about the rural and the agrarian. Villages in India have historically developed in the context of complex relations between spaces identified as such as “rural” and “urban” or “town” and “country” and a spectrum of intermediate spaces with ambiguous identities. The ongoing urban and demographic expansion, has not only blurred boundaries between rural and urban but sharpened differences between village and rural.

There are villages which are not exclusively rural and have acquired urban characters. Further there are cities which are full of villages. The urban also encompasses rural. Indeed, we cannot speak of a single rural and we certainly don't have a single urban. These experiences are differentiated and segmented in different ways. Further, given the growing non-farm presence in rural India, neither is the rural exclusively agrarian, nor is the village. In the context of such emerging complexities, and given the renewed interest in village studies and longitudinal change studies, it is useful to ask the questions: What makes a “village” in India today amidst changing landscapes, flows of capital, work and labour, and complex interdependencies across villages, towns and cities? Even if the “rural” as such is disappearing, what can we say about the “village” and its intimate connections with kasba, city and urban but also with other villages, forest, and the larger ecological landscape? Interrogating the kind of social relations that sustain and constitute the village, it becomes critical to know how class, caste and gender processes shape the village. What is the basis of caste in a village today? How have agrarian change and changed patterns of property ownership and work flows including

migration furthered class differentiation and impacted caste and gender relations? Could we still aver with Ambedkar's observation of the village as the "cesspool of backwardness"? How is caste mobilized in electoral politics by different social groups and communities in changing rural scenario? What are the emerging power forms and nodes in rural India and within villages? What are the new ways of exclusion and inclusion in village and rural? How do village-level narratives of change scale up to block, district and state / regional or national level narratives? How are forms of family changing in village India? Has this shifted the ground for the patriarchal family, its legitimation through cultural mores? How do the youth in villages experience change and identities of sexuality and gender? Is gender always feminine or are masculinities as important as femininities? Finally, how have communal relations and caste relations fared in the space of the rural?

PANEL 2: Agriculture, Agrarian Relations and Labour

This topic will explore how Indian agriculture and agrarian relations are shaped by the wider world of industry, "national" development projects, a neoliberal state agenda, and financial capital. The fundamental questions that will be addressed include: What is agriculture today and how could it be viewed as a complex process of the production, circulation and consumption of commodities? What are the key transformations in agriculture in the liberalization period starting late 1980s? What is the so-called "agrarian crisis" - what are its signals, explanations and impacts? How is agriculture being reshaped by the new industrial and urban policy? How are "new" technologies shaping Indian agriculture? What are the dominant forms of agrarian relations in land, labor and capital, and caste, class and gender? What are its implications for rural struggles, worker and community organizations and social movements? How does Indian agriculture respond to / or instantiate global forces and trends? How is the question of food security related to the state of and prospects for agriculture and agrarian relations? How has rapid urbanization changed the modes in which urban, peri-urban, and rural spaces and rural communities approach the food system? Given the ways in which agriculture is increasingly dependent upon urban and remote markets, how is "sustainable agriculture" defined, imagined and practiced today? How, for example, has the focus on cash crops created imbalances in rural diet/food, market and credit dependency? How have food practices and consumption changed over a period of time?

PANEL 3: Capital, Markets and the New Economy: The Urban-Rural Continuum

Building upon the first two topics (Village India and Agriculture / Agrarian relations), this topic will focus on the ways in which capital and market are reworking rural economies and creating a rural-urban continuum in socioeconomic, political and ecological terms. The idea here is to interrogate the possibilities that are emerging for broad-based popular solidarities and alliances and a policy-making which puts people over profits. Key questions which will be addressed include: What new production patterns and capital investment regimes in the countryside are emerging in India and what significance do they have for different class/caste groups and for the varied occupations? What are the emerging solidarities within the agrarian and industrial labouring classes, and their counterparts within the worlds of agrarian and financial/capital? What implications do these class alliances have for trends in occupations and aspirations among rural citizens? Given such a dynamic situation in agriculture, agrarian relations and the village, what does "rural development" mean in India today? Given the growing significance and power of private capital accumulation, what does this mean for the Indian state's role in development and its large welfare schemes such as MNREGA, Food Security, etc.? What are some of the major forces that are resisting the growing pressures on land via acquisition for extractive industries and their attendant displacement, livelihood loss and ecological devastation in India?

PANEL 4: Fault Lines: Emerging Contestations on Land, Water and Forests

Complementing the previous topic, this topic will specifically focus on issues of access to and allocation of land, water and forests – three natural resources which are central to the flourishing of rural livelihoods and communities. The active role of the Indian state in facilitating “grabs” for private capital and for “public-private partnerships” will be addressed here. The issue of allocation of water is deeply political when some groups enjoy access at the cost of other groups. Increasing number of tube wells and submersible have changed the politics and culture of water in some parts of rural India and created new ways of exclusion. Who accesses water and at what cost? How is the use and extraction of groundwater changed over the last few decades? Further, how has the destruction and encroachment of the local/traditional water commons created new marginalities and vulnerabilities? How do traditional/historical water/forest management practices interact with the new/modern management of water/forest or allocation? How does declining water table affect different communities? What different meanings are attached to water by different communities and classes, and rural and urban or industries and agriculturalists, and how does this shape emerging solidarities? How is land tenure negotiated in the acquisition of land – i.e., whose land is at stake when the state actively connives with private capital? How is this acquisition rationalized by a state whose legitimacy is continually questioned? How do caste, class and gender mediate access to water, land and forest? What are the emerging forms of management/allocation by communities and the state / capital of and access to water, land and forest in different regions of India? Finally, what are some ways to think about the allocation of “scarce” and finite natural resources in ways that foreground issues of equity, justice and sustainability?

PANEL 5: Education, Mobility and Aspirations in Rural India

This topic focuses on one institution central to social change – the school and schooling practices. What is the significance of the RTE and the spread of schooling in rural areas? What impact has the growth of a range of different types of schools had on rural society? How new opportunities are made possible by the growing education market impacting various class/caste groups and genders? How do new aspirations and orientations reflect on rural movements and political affiliations? What are the rural aspirations, and how different social groups articulating them. How these aspirations are mediated by caste, class and gender? What significance do these have for youth groups and for the growth of caste-based organisations? Who are the youth, and what are their social, economic and political activities in rural areas? How has expansion of education created new exclusions in rural areas, and are there specific forms of opportunity hoarding in rural areas that differ from that in urban areas? How are rural youth disadvantaged than urban youth? Has expansion of education and aspiration of non-farm jobs created rural middle class?

Closing Session: Studying the Village, Rural and Agriculture: The Way Forward

Drawing upon the various review papers and new presentations, this session will bring together the important themes that have emerged in the three day workshop. It will aim to set an agenda for research on the new dimensions of Village, rural and agrarian change and suggest ways in which the NRAS can engage further with researchers in rural and peri-urban areas as well as with policy makers. The idea is to generate interest in the larger academic and teaching community on issues related to the rural and agrarian and utilise this interest to create a new body of research and teaching specifically concerned about such issues. While emphasising that the village, rural and agriculture is far from being exhausted as a topic of research, the workshop will carry forward the message that the underlying processes of transformation need a close study to understand the social and political ramifications of rural change.

Note: In the Conference, panel 5 (Education) was wrapped into panel 1 (Village India), and the order of the panels was changed for logistical reasons.

Report on the 2nd Mentoring Initiative of the NRAS Held at GBPSSI, Allahabad, December 20, 2015

The second mentoring initiative of the NRAS was held alongside the fourth workshop in Allahabad as a step towards fulfilling our aim of influencing the teaching and research taking place in rural and peri-urban institutions on issues pertinent to agrarian and rural change.

The half-day 'Mentoring Initiative' for students and teachers in rural and peri-urban universities and local practitioners in/around Allahabad took place on December 20, 2015. Prospective participants had submitted a written paper / research proposal of 1500-2000 words, on the basis of which they were selected. Upon selection, each participant was paired with senior and junior scholars associated with the NRAS. Participants were able to discuss their research ideas, receive one-on-one feedback on their submissions, and discuss concerns related to choosing research methods, field research, publishing, research ethics, revising written work, literature review, scoping their topic, and other issues related to research and publication.

Feedback from participants of the 2nd workshop

Question: Were you satisfied with the interaction with a mentor today? Did it help you further your research and /or writing skills? In what specific ways?

1. Yes! There is a dearth of engagement with these issues in the institutional environment I come from. So the first thing was I felt was that there is a community of scholars/activists interested in issues that I feel have fallen out of favour in institutional academia. There were some specific suggestions of readings and possible further research that I received from my mentors. I look forward to being in touch with them.
2. I am more or less satisfied with the interaction. Although it feels such a short interaction would not played that much role but continued interaction would definitely help us as it gives us the first steps. The suggestions given by mentors would definitely help me in producing a good study.
3. I am satisfied with the mentor's comment on my research topic and [will] try to define the terms I used in my paper.
4. Yes, I was able to get specific inputs [on] how to take my study forward.
5. It was okay but not completely as per my expectations. It helped add on to my list for literature review but did not really help to further refine my research.
6. Though helped indeed but could have been more interactive. Could manage to get only limited feedback.
7. Yes, it has, by having me formulate my research interest. And with some suggested readings.
8. Yes, it helped me with nuanced insight on my proposal. Some suggestions on readings were very helpful and the assurance that we can get back to them was very wonderful.
9. Yes. It introduced me to look at my concerns at a larger scale and to methods that I could use.
10. Absolutely, it reinforced my doubts about my own shallow knowledge. The prime objectives and the framing of questions needed have emerged as very valuable feedback.
11. Yes. It did better than my expectations. It helped me to trim and focus my dissertation
12. Yes it was. It specifically helped in (a) classifying methodological issues (b) know literature from other disciplines that I was not aware of / familiar with.

13. I received feedback on my research proposal, which I found useful. In particular, I valued the directions of enquiry which opened up through the mentoring process both conceptually and practically speaking from a fieldwork perspective.
14. There was some good talk about going in to write a proposal and what you should know at the time, about the importance of evidence etc., there wasn't any talk on writing skills
15. Yes, Yes. The following questions were very helpful: a) Questions you are trying to answer – Why? How? b) Where does it fall in the bigger picture/ c) Could you look at the same question in a different manner i.e. question of approach? d) Could / couldn't you have dug slightly deeper? other regions? other countries?
16. I am satisfied with the interaction with a mentor today. This interaction will help me in my study and in future in the area of rural finance.
17. Yes, I discussed the methodology of my work and have got new dimensions to add.

This time there were several outstation participants from Delhi and Bangalore, who applied to participate in the Mentoring Initiative after hearing about the success of the 1st Mentoring Initiative. Appended below is feedback from a participant in the 1st Mentoring Initiative which was held at Bhopal in 2014.

“I can confirm with the greatest sincerity that the Mentoring Initiative at the NRAS last year (2014) was very meaningful for me. I started my PhD in Anthropology in the US this year and while I attended the NRAS last year, I was in the process of applying. Other than the material specific feedback and advice I got on my writing and content, especially from Dr. Balmurli Natarajan and Dr. Satish Deshpande, it was a great opportunity to see how my own interests, research and otherwise engaged with those of others. The mentoring session at the NRAS as well as the other sessions including the diversity of participants was certainly and significantly helpful in determining and assuring me of my project. I must also admit that the 'network' at the NRAS itself is very enabling. Along with one of the other participants and mentees, we organised a feedback workshop for our own project in Uttarakhand, where I lived and worked before getting to the US, and we invited some of the people we met at the NRAS, who were relevant to the project's mandate to attend. Given that Uttarakhand is marginal to institutional research in places like Delhi, this was a fantastic forum for young researchers like us and the NRAS network was one of our helpful resources and references.”

The NRAS has **launched its new website (ruralagrarianstudies.org)** where it is now possible to find a mentor and become part of a community working on issues of rural and agrarian change. The NRAS proposes to conduct more Mentoring Initiatives in the future to provide support to young researchers and promote the research and pedagogical aims of the network.

List of Mentees:

1. Vrinda Manocha, M.A. Development, Azim Premji University, Bangalore
2. Vineet Singh, M.Phil. in Development Studies, GB Pant Social Science Institute, Allahabad
3. Venkat Ramanujam, ATREE, Bangalore
4. Usman Jawed. M.Phil. Student and Guest Lecturer, University of Delhi
5. Tushar Goel, M.A. Development, Azim Premji University, Bangalore
6. Siddharth Lodha, Azim Premji University, Bangalore
7. Sarah Jacobson, M.A. Development, Azim Premji University, Bangalore
8. Sapna Maurya, Doctoral Student, Allahabad University

9. Riddhi Pandey, M.A. Development, Azim Premji University, Bangalore
10. Rama Shanker Singh, GB Pant Social Science Institute, Allahabad
11. Rajesh S. M.A. Development, Azim Premji University, Bangalore
12. Nikhit Agrawal, Project Associate, DST Centre for Policy Research, IIT Delhi
13. Nidhi Ganguly, JRF, Department of Economics, University of Allahabad
14. Mudit Kumar Singh, Ph.D. student, Department of HUSS, MNNIT Allahabad
15. Manis, Research Scholar, Department of HUSS, MNNIT Allahabad
16. Harinam Singh, Ph.D. Scholar in Economics, IGNOU, New Delhi
17. Dharamjeet Kumar, M.A. Development, Azim Premji University, Bangalore
18. Apoorva Gautam, Ph.D. Student, Sociology, JNU, Delhi
19. Anurag Kanaujia, AcSIR PhD, CSIR-NISTADS, New Delhi
20. Ankit Pathak, GB Pant Social Science Institute, Allahabad
21. Anand Raja, Masters Student, TISS Mumbai
22. Sachikanta Tripathy, GB Pant Social Science Institute, Allahabad

List of Mentors:

1. A.R. Vasavi, Independent Scholar
2. Balmurli Natrajan, APU, Bangalore
3. G. Chandraiah, G.B. Pant Social Science Institute, Allahabad
4. Gitika De, University of Delhi
5. M. Vijay Baskar, Madras Institute of Development Studies, Chennai
6. P.S. Vijayshankar, SPS, Bagli, Madhya Pradesh
7. Rajeswari Raina, NISTADS, New Delhi
8. Ravindra Karnena, University of Delhi
9. Richa Kumar, Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi
10. Satendra Kumar, G.B. Pant Social Science Institute, Allahabad
11. Satish Deshpande, University of Delhi
12. Shambu Prasad, IRMA, Ahmedabad
13. Shelley Feldman, Cornell University, USA
14. Sudeep Basu, Central University of Gujarat, Gandhinagar
15. Suraj Jacob, APU, Bangalore