

# **Economic Differentiation in Peasantry and Relative Efficiency of Owner Versus Tenant Cultivation : An Empirical Investigation**

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This paper attempts to enquire into the relative efficiency of owner tenant cultivation (on per acre basis) on two Orissa villages following the widely prevalent farm-size grouping as well as labour exploitation index formulated in the Marxist framework. It critically examines the inadequacies in the former method for not taking into account resource endowment of household relative to its production capacity and consumption needs in the changing agrarian situation, and for assuming that peasantry is undifferentiated. Accordingly, it argues that in a situation of hierarchical possession of land and non-land means of production Marxist theory of class differentiation in peasantry seems to be a suitable analytical alternative to look at the agrarian structure in a historical perspective. Therefore, labour-exploitation index could adequately capture certain qualitative differences between the classes with respect to the way production activity is organised, and the resultant yield differences.

## **Introduction**

The primary purpose of this paper is to investigate into relative efficiency of owner and tenant cultivation by both aggregation methods; namely, by acreage level of farms as well as by class categories in a given environment of high degree of inequality in the distribution of land and other means of production in the agrarian sector. Hence, by efficiency we mean merely physical productivity (gross) or land per acre under different production conditions and nothing else. The back ground to this enquiry is the extensive, and on going debates regarding the relative efficiency of tenant farms over owner operated farms in the context of some development in agrarian relations in recent years in a particular direction. This is because farm acreage is used in these exercises as a sufficient index of the scale and character of farms, though quite evidently, any given acreage group can contain very dissimilar types of holdings.