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**DYNAMICS OF AGRARIAN POWER STRUCTURE AND
POVERTY IN RURAL BIHAR**

**THESIS SUBMITTED TO GOKHALE INSTITUTE OF POLITICS
AND ECONOMICS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF
PHILOSOPHY IN ECONOMICS**

**BY
ANTO JOSEPH**

**UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF
DR. K. G. KSHIRSAGAR
PROFESSOR IN ECONOMICS**

**GOKHALE INSTITUTE OF POLITICS AND ECONOMICS
(DEEMED TO BE A UNIVERSITY)
PUNE-411004**

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CERTIFIED that the work incorporated in the thesis “Dynamics of Agrarian Power Structure and Poverty in Rural Bihar” submitted by Shri. Anto Joseph was carried out by the candidate under my guidance. Such material as has been obtained from other sources has been duly acknowledged in the thesis.

Research Guide



Dr. K.G. Kshirsagar

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ABBREVIATIONS

AL	Agricultural Labour/Labourer
BDO	Block Development Officer
BPL	Below Poverty Line
CD	Block Community Development Block
CMIE	Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy
CP	Capability Poverty/Poor
CUP	Cambridge University Press
FBIC	Friendship Based Informal Credit
FC	Formal Credit
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GOB	Government of Bihar
GOI	Government of India
GSDP	Gross State Domestic Product
HCR	Head Count Ratio
HDI	Human Development Index
HPI	Human Poverty Index
IAY	<i>Indira Awas Yojana</i>
IFC	Informal Credit
IIPS	International Institute of Population Studies
IMR	Infant Mortality Rate
IP	Income Poverty/Poor
LAIC	Land Alienating Informal Credit
LDCs	Less Developed Countries
LTIC	Labour Tying Informal Credit
NFHS	National Family Health Survey
NPP	Non-Productive Purposes
NSS	National Sample Survey
NSSO	National Sample Survey Organization
OBC	Other Backward Castes
OUP	Oxford University Press
PCCE	Per Capita Consumption Expenditure
PCY	Per Capita Income
PDS	Public Distribution System

PGI	Poverty Gap Index
POIC	Profit Oriented Informal Credit
PP	Productive Purposes
PPA	Participatory Poverty Assessment
SC	Scheduled Castes
SGRY	<i>Sampoorna Grammeen Rojgaar Yojana</i>
SGSY	<i>Sampoorna Grammeen Sadak Yojana</i>
SHG	Self Help Groups
TE	Triennium Ending
UN	United Nations
UBC	Upper Backward Castes
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
WB	World Bank

Appendix 1: A Note on Agrarian Structure in Bihar

The historical evolution of agrarian structure in Bihar has been a function of the changing pattern of land relations. The agrarian society during the Mughal period was not a highly differentiated society. Though some kind of indigenous classification did exist during the Mughal period (see Betteille, 1974, 126; Harcourt, 1977, 324-5; and Thorner, 1976), the ownership of land and rights of various classes in the use of land had remained uncertain (Dhanagare, 1983, 25). There was no ownership of land in the sense of absolute rights; rather the more or less undifferentiated agrarian population had different rights to the same land (rights to collect revenue and rights to use the land for cultivation). During the British period the land relations were fundamentally altered. The *Zameendars* who were formed into a class under the Mughal period by their right to collect rent from the area of their jurisdiction were formed into a new class by a redefinition of their relationship to land as having absolute property rights in land, which they never had. Land 'belonged' to them in an absolute sense. They had the right to the use and control of land. And agricultural labourers formed the class of surplus producers having absolutely no rights in land. The caste configurations of agrarian classes remained much the same during the colonial period as under the Mughal period.

In the post independence period the ownership of land has become more rigid and hence the demarcation of agrarian classes has become clearer. Daniel Thorner (1956), Andre Beteile (1974), Mencher (1974), Alvi (1975), Harris (1977) and Dhanagare (1983) among others have suggested different agrarian classes characterizing the agrarian structure in post-independence India. In the context of Bihar, Blair (1980), Prasad (1979, 1987, and 1989) and Frankel (1989) among many others have tried to identify the nature of agrarian structure in Bihar. They have not only suggested different combinations of classes characterizing the agrarian structure in Bihar but also suggested certain broad patterns regarding their social composition. According to Prasad (1989), most of the landlords and rich peasants come from the upper castes - Brahmins, Rajputs, Bhumihars, and Kayasthas. On the other extreme, more than 90 per cent of the SCs are in the class of landless agricultural labourers.

In the post-independence period, in the case of Bihar, the class of large owners of land got somewhat broadened to include the new entrants who came to own large amount of land. A section of the upper backward castes were growing restless as their economic aspirations kept increasing. They, who were also in a better position to take maximum advantage of the reform measures, joined the rank of the class of owners of large landholdings. This has changed the caste configurations of this class. In the pre-independence period this class was almost completely fused with the upper castes. In the post-independence period, with the broadening of this class to include the new entrants, the domination of upper caste has seriously eroded. And over the years the upper backward castes have consolidated their social, political and economic position in rural Bihar. The upper backward castes - Yadav, Koeri and Kurmi - had significantly improved their economic position. The scheduled castes that constitute the vast majority of the agricultural labourers did not benefit from these changes. Their condition, in fact, worsened.

Appendix 2: List of Variables Used for Selection of Districts

- 1) Population as percentage of the total population in the state
- 2) Population Density
- 3) Percentage of SC Population
- 4) Literacy Rate
- 5) Sex Ratio
- 6) Number of Villages
- 7) Average Village Size
- 8) Average Household Size
- 9) Percentage of Cultivators
- 10) Percentage of Agricultural Labourers
- 11) Percentage of Those in Household Industry
- 12) Gross Area Sown
- 13) Gross Area Irrigated (Percentage of total Cropped Area)
- 14) Area under Rice
- 15) Area under Wheat
- 16) Per Capita Value of Agricultural Production
- 17) Per Capita Credit to Agriculture
- 18) Average Size of landholding
- 19) Percentage Villages Electrified

Appendix 3: Variables Used for Selection of CD Blocks

- 1) Population as Percentage of District Population
- 2) Work Participation Rate
- 3) Percentage of Cultivators
- 4) Percentage of Agricultural Labourers
- 5) Percentage of those in Household Industry
- 6) Average Household Size
- 7) Sex Ratio
- 8) Percentage of SC Population
- 9) Literacy Rate
- 10) Gross Cultivated Area
- 11) Gross Area Irrigated

Appendix 4: Share of Institutional Debt to Total Debt

States	All Agricultural-Labour Households				
	1974-75	1977-78	1983	1987-88	1993-94
AP	4.86	11.70	17.40	15.14	16.36
Assam	6.96	2.42	8.60	1.74	4.13
Bihar	1.23	2.50	6.53	29.03	29.30
Gujarat	7.88	24.90	18.83	43.30	31.52
Haryana	10.50	14.87	94.44	53.32	18.71
HP	11.09	15.44	56.12	53.43	21.09
JK	3.61	6.25	35.18	20.52	34.48
Karnataka	11.60	29.96	38.46	56.51	22.28
Kerala	23.92	41.25	53.14	72.45	81.91
MP	9.35	21.94	32.68	40.97	57.47
Maharashtra	27.04	49.41	43.74	60.94	62.21
Orissa	14.93	33.68	63.64	73.08	49.63
Punjab	12.99	12.98	17.29	20.72	17.55
Rajasthan	2.37	8.13	18.58	50.67	4.17
TN	8.50	13.75	24.27	22.19	26.99
UP	4.01	10.15	16.19	22.99	38.31
WB	8.25	16.80	30.95	22.48	39.93
All India	8.90	19.24	44.06	34.58	35.85
States Average	9.95	18.60	33.89	38.79	32.74
CV	70.15	71.82	67.41	54.62	63.33
States	Scheduled Castes Agricultural-Labour Households				
	1974-75	1977-78	1983	1987-88	1993-94
AP	2.96	8.81	16.25	16.54	11.98
Assam	13.93	0.00	10.26	9.91	18.52
Bihar	1.08	2.85	7.18	29.64	36.75
Gujarat	2.71	8.91	29.12	55.42	20.27
Haryana	11.09	11.45	96.54	58.08	17.86
HP	64.92	12.99	55.59	52.95	21.81
JK	5.58	1.66	35.16	40.77	38.74
Karnataka	5.00	32.97	47.16	66.15	25.66
Kerala	19.76	26.95	38.04	77.78	78.26
MP	6.72	17.61	26.87	34.71	47.70
Maharashtra	21.31	55.63	48.67	57.71	44.01
Orissa	11.45	34.56	66.63	74.01	54.19
Punjab	11.77	12.84	18.68	22.61	19.60
Rajasthan	2.94	5.08	17.90	43.58	3.18
TN	5.43	11.60	29.92	35.58	31.48
UP	3.20	10.65	19.33	31.01	42.83
WB	5.16	17.39	31.90	63.64	43.55
All India	5.76	13.36	59.85	39.16	30.10
States Average	11.47	16.00	35.01	45.30	32.73
CV	130.81	89.37	64.79	44.16	56.04

Source: Rural labour enquiry of various years, as collated by Narayanamurthy (2001).

Appendix 5: Income Transfer in rural Bihar (2003-04)

Schemes	Allocation (Rs. in Lakh)			Release (Rs. in Lakh)		
	Central	State	Total	Central	State	Total
S.G.SY.	10084.97	3361.66	13446.63	5488.81	1335.13	6823.94
S.G.R.Y. – I	21618.95	7206.35	28825.30	17275.52	4729.63	22005.15
S.G.R.Y. – II	20218.76	6739.59	26958.35	16106.35	4345.79	20452.14
I.A.Y.	37131.83	12377.28	49509.11	25164.82	6551.37	31716.19
DRDA				828.22	249.19	1077.41
DPAP				694.31	129.62	823.93
Total	89054.51	28684.88	118739.39	65558.03	17340.73	82898.76

Source: Government of Bihar

Appendix 6: Acquisition and Distribution of Surplus Land

In Acres

Name of Districts	Surplus Land Declared (March 2004)	Surplus Land Acquired (March 2004)	Surplus Land Distributed (Sept. 2004)	
			SC	Total
Patna	3241.02	2949.98	2580.76	2833.37
Nalanda	1301.00	1302.00	933.21	1277.99
Bhojpur	2301.00	1443.00	1206.27	1435.41
Buxar	3733.08	2334.00	1997.88	2301.23
Rohtas	5211.97	3381.00	1560.30	3359.66
Kaimur	5073.05	3941.00	1885.45	2424.44
Gaya	39309.00	39022.00	17398.00	37839.08
Jehanabad	1294.00	1183.00	563.32	895.32
Nawada	4952.00	4241.00	2872.09	2993.99
Aurangabad	6048.00	5841.00	2110.00	3623.37
Arawal	29.11	29.11	0.00	8.58
Siwan	1408.00	1185.00	601.64	833.65
Gopalganj	2706.00	1170.37	739.57	1170.37
Shivhar	764.00	542.88	0.00	459.22
Muzaffarpur	6521.00	4905.15	3707.43	4905.15
Champanan 1	26795.49	26795.49	11678.80	13913.28
Champanan 2	46457.00	29890.00	18529.76	26166.72
Sitamarhi	7632.00	4905.00	4839.58	5861.67
Vishali	2938.48	2938.48	2543.05	2821.62
Darbhanga	19801.00	16475.78	5672.77	7601.70
Madhubani	19015.00	15986.87	6651.66	9025.57
Samastipur	18590.00	12536.96	5177.77	5629.39
Begusarai	14003.00	8782.00	6495.26	8415.84
Munger	15543.42	9607.00	7001.44	9597.44
Jamuie	7109.00	6763.00	3115.94	4683.13
Khagaria	4824.00	4622.76	4315.64	4622.55
Lakhisarai	2204.49	2204.49	0.00	1240.39
Sheikhpura	271.00	271.00	199.43	269.41
Bhagalpur	21592.00	16865.22	7114.67	10137.98
Banka	3774.00	3767.04	1662.62	3613.08
Saharsa	7044.00	4704.35	3238.05	4100.98
Supaul	8762.00	7419.00	3877.45	5214.00
Madhepura	16965.00	11851.68	5147.73	6672.29
Purnia	48470.00	47673.60	16445.39	38602.13
Kishanganj	19104.00	18801.59	2161.44	18559.83
Araria	19104.00	15105.42	7612.16	14556.74
Katihar	37129.00	36942.49	13971.99	35527.59
Total	453517.11	381925.09	177485.10	305600.76

Source: Government of Bihar

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