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

JUNE 2007
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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
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

"I am because we are" is a dictum in African philosophical thought. I submit myself to this profound insight into human interrelatedness. This study is a fruit of my interrelatedness to many persons. To them, I owe my deepest gratitude. This study is in response to the love of the many people I have known during my stay in some villages in Bihar. The respondents in the villages of my study had extended full cooperation and hospitality to me. This study is as much theirs as it is mine.

I met Dr. K.G. Kshirsagar, Professor, Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics at the start of my study. Since then, he guided me through thick and thin and supervised my study. I acknowledge his valuable guidance, support and encouragement with profound gratitude.

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I am grateful to the officers and the staff of the secretariat, Government of Bihar, for their cooperation and readiness to help me. I am grateful to the officials and the staff of Ratan Tata Library, Delhi, A. N. Sinha Institute Library, Patna, and the Planning Commission Library, Yojana Bhawan, Delhi.

I thank the Society of Jesus for encouragement and financial assistance. My parents, sisters, brothers and friends had an important role in my study. They are my love.
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ABBREVIATIONS

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<tr>
<td>AL</td>
<td>Agricultural Labour/Labourer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BDO</td>
<td>Block Development Officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>BPL</td>
<td>Below Poverty Line</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD</td>
<td>Block Community Development Block</td>
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<tr>
<td>CMIE</td>
<td>Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CP</td>
<td>Capability Poverty/Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CUP</td>
<td>Cambridge University Press</td>
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<tr>
<td>FBIC</td>
<td>Friendship Based Informal Credit</td>
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<td>FC</td>
<td>Formal Credit</td>
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<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
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<td>GOB</td>
<td>Government of Bihar</td>
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<td>GOI</td>
<td>Government of India</td>
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<tr>
<td>GSDP</td>
<td>Gross State Domestic Product</td>
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<td>HCR</td>
<td>Head Count Ratio</td>
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<td>HDI</td>
<td>Human Development Index</td>
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<td>HPI</td>
<td>Human Poverty Index</td>
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<td>IAY</td>
<td><em>Indira Awas Yojana</em></td>
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<td>IFC</td>
<td>Informal Credit</td>
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<td>IIPS</td>
<td>International Institute of Population Studies</td>
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<td>IMR</td>
<td>Infant Mortality Rate</td>
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<td>IP</td>
<td>Income Poverty/Poor</td>
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<td>LAIC</td>
<td>Land Alienating Informal Credit</td>
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<td>LDCs</td>
<td>Less Developed Countries</td>
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<td>LTIC</td>
<td>Labour Tying Informal Credit</td>
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<td>NFHS</td>
<td>National Family Health Survey</td>
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<td>Non-Productive Purposes</td>
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<td>National Sample Survey Organization</td>
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<td>OBC</td>
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<td>OUP</td>
<td>Oxford University Press</td>
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<tr>
<td>PCCE</td>
<td>Per Capita Consumption Expenditure</td>
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<td>PCY</td>
<td>Per Capita Income</td>
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<td>PDS</td>
<td>Public Distribution System</td>
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<tr>
<td>PGI</td>
<td>Poverty Gap Index</td>
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<td>POIC</td>
<td>Profit Oriented Informal Credit</td>
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<td>PP</td>
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<td>PPA</td>
<td>Participatory Poverty Assessment</td>
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<td>SC</td>
<td>Scheduled Castes</td>
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<td>SGRY</td>
<td>Sampoorna Grammeen Rojgaar Yojana</td>
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<td>SGSY</td>
<td>Sampoorna Grammeen Sadak Yojana</td>
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<tr>
<td>SHG</td>
<td>Self Help Groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>TE</td>
<td>Triennium Ending</td>
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<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>UBC</td>
<td>Upper Backward Castes</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Program</td>
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<td>WB</td>
<td>World Bank</td>
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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 *Zameendar* 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 Beteille (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

292
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

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Appendix 4: Share of Institutional Debt to Total Debt

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Source: Rural labour enquiry of various years, as collated by Narayanamurthy (2001).
Appendix 5: Income Transfer in rural Bihar (2003-04)

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*Source: Government of Bihar*
Appendix 6: Acquisition and Distribution of Surplus Land

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Source: Government of Bihar
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