

Commercialization
of Hinterland and
Dynamics of Class,
Caste and Gender
in Rural India

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By

Supriya Singh

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ABBREVIATIONS

ASHA	Accredited Rural Health Activist
BA	Bachelor of Arts
BKT	<i>Bakshi Ka Talab</i>
BJP	<i>Bharatiya Janata Party</i>
BPL	Below Poverty Line
BSP	<i>Bahujan Samajwadi party</i>
CA	Commercial Area
DM	District Magistrate
KGMU	King George Medical University
LDA	Lucknow Development Authority
MA	Master of Arts
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
NSS	National Sample Survey
NSSO	National Sample Survey Organization
OBC	Other Backward classes
SC	Scheduled Castes
SP	<i>Samajwadi Party</i>
SIA	Social Impact Assessment
SCZ	Special Economic Zones
SUV	Sports Utility Vehicle
UP	<i>Uttar Pradesh</i>

FOREWORD

Agricultural land and issues concerning land are critical in a society like India, where approximately 70 percent of the population depends on agriculture. Right from the beginning of British colonialism in India, land relations began to change due to various land settlements introduced by the British rule in order to extract as much tax as possible. Initially, they enacted the Permanent Zamindari Act in 1793, which brought about significant changes in land relations, commencing the process of class formation and social mobility in rural India.

For a century, the British Raj experimented with other kinds of settlements and land acquisition acts, primarily for extracting surplus and other commercial drives but occasionally for public purposes as well, e.g., railways, roads and canals. This unleashed processes of change and social mobility at the village level in particular and the wider level in general. It is also responsible for the initiation of the commodification of agricultural land in India and the commencement of the land market. After a century, the British government replaced various previous acts of land acquisition with the Land Acquisition Act, 1894, which continued even after India's independence. It was replaced only recently by The Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013. The British policies, over a period of time, prompted the process of socioeconomic mobility as well as many dysfunctional consequences for the rural society in India. It can be considered the first phase of the social mobility and change in the agrarian structure in modern India.

After independence, all provincial governments abolished earlier land settlement acts, sooner or later, particularly the Permanent Zamindari Act. The state initiated other land reforms, giving rise to a transformation in the agrarian structure and the land market and having considerable effects on the village society in India. This may be envisaged as the second phase of the rural social mobility in India, bringing both the consequences – upward mobility and downward mobility – simultaneously. It demolished the intermediary class of landlords but at the same time gave rise to the independent peasantry and entrepreneurial farmers. The land market expanded too. With it there developed the fissiparous propensities in the

rural social structure, resulting in peasant unrests and caste-cum-class conflicts in rural India.

The third phase of rural social mobility started in the aftermath of the state-directed globalization and neo-liberalization after 1991. Far-reaching “economic reforms” were introduced, swaying all sectors of socioeconomic life, including the agrarian sector. State intervention in terms of various initiatives, acts, and policies created a valorized land market throughout the nation, particularly in the metropolises, near large cities and highways. Land acquisitions either by the government itself or by private companies and land dealings for commercial purposes have emerged as overpowering activities in urban fringes. Their impact on the economy and society of nearby villages is rather prominent and can be witnessed in the rise of the *Gesellschaft*, the rural middle class, heightened social mobility and social disorganization in urban neighbourhoods.

Situated against this backdrop, the present volume is a sociological appraisal of rural social mobility and the changing forms of social stratification, with special reference to class, caste and gender, in the selected fringe villages of a north Indian metropolis. The study is based on the intensive study of households, and provides in-depth details. The analysis of the nature of rural social mobility in terms of a rising rural middle class and women’s empowerment in the domestic sphere is noteworthy and a fresh perspective in the field. The commodification of land and the charm of urban life and consumer culture act as catalytic factors for more land coming to the market all the time. Increasing urbanization and commercialization have opened up numerous prospects for land transactions, making it a lucrative business. Successively, crony capitalism keeps exerting pressure on the state agencies to acquire land for the ulterior motive of earning profits, as much as possible, through land dealings as well as the establishment of industries and other business organizations. The Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013, can be understood as a balancing apparatus between the penetration of capital in the rural land market on the one hand and, on the other, the interests of the rural masses. The book deals with the social consequences of this phenomenon, analyzing its implications for rural society in terms of downward and upward rural social mobility and providing an overview of the land and the state relationship over a longer period of time.

The authentic account and the fresh analytical perspective of the volume make it useful to policy makers, planners, researchers and concerned people. I hope that the present volume based on a comprehensive study of the selected villages in a backward province of

India will be appreciated by readers for its fresh viewpoint and insight into land transactions and their concomitant effects on the social structure of Indian villages.

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PREFACE

The present volume deals with the land transactions and changing dimensions of rural India in the neighbourhood of Lucknow, the capital of the most populous province of India. The study is an attempt to explore the various dimensions of social mobility induced by land transactions in Indian villages against the backdrop of the changing political economy of the region. In a country like India, where land is crucial both for livelihoods as well as for development, the parting of land from peasants either voluntarily or under the state policy of compulsion/acquisition is very important. Since independence, land has been the fulcrum of so many movements and protests. In the context where people are resisting land acquisition, the present book analyzes how the voluntary selling of land is affecting the village community and its social structure. The work of which this book is the realization was conducted in the BKT block of Lucknow district of Uttar Pradesh.

The book is an endeavour to describe how urbanization has contributed to increasing the land prices. It induces land to come into the market and be a part of the wider economy. The book tries to examine trends in the social mobility in different castes, especially in the lower and middle castes, and attempts to locate a rural middle class as a result of land transactions. The status of rural women has undergone many changes due to their ownership of land. It has not only induced mobility in their status within the family but has also empowered them economically. The present research deals with land transactions and the concomitant changes in rural society.

The book is divided into seven chapters. In the first chapter, a review of salient studies of Indian rural life, social mobility and land transactions has been attempted. It also analyzes relevant and appropriate methodological tools and techniques. The second chapter contextualizes the selected villages in a political economy model. The chapter describes in detail the differential relationship between land and state in earlier times and tries to link it with the present scenario. It pinpoints and explains the aspects and conditions of increasing land transactions in urban neighbourhoods. The third chapter presents the changing rural life of the area and studied villages in terms of cultural, socioeconomic, political and educational features. The fourth chapter deals with caste and mobility,

highlighting mobility in terms of class, status and power. The fifth chapter delineates the nature, aspects and dynamics of the rural middle class with relation to depeasantization and embourgeoisement, emphasizing the emergence and growth of the rural middle class. The sixth chapter deals with mobility among women and tries to examine the impact of land transactions on the status of rural women. The last section interprets the findings sociologically.

This volume is an outcome of the valuable guidance that I have received from my mentor, Prof. Rajesh Misra, an eminent scholar and a great teacher. This book would not have been possible without his support and erudite suggestions. He reflected on the manuscript very minutely. I sincerely thank him for his valuable input and comments. I am highly grateful to all the villagers of both the villages who supported me during my fieldwork by welcoming me into their lives, patiently answering my repeated queries and by sparing time from their hectic schedules. Their sincere responses to my questions regarding their property and land issues helped me collect authentic information, without which I would not have been able to accomplish my work. I am also highly thankful to my parents, who went through a great deal to bring me to this level of academic achievement. Ultimately, I am grateful to the publisher for appreciating my work and deciding to publish it.

CHAPTER ONE

SOCIOLOGY OF LAND TRANSACTIONS AND ACQUISITIONS: RELEVANT CONCEPTS, THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS AND QUESTIONS

The present work explicates the nature, dimensions and consequences of social mobility in the aftermath of increasing land transactions in the neighbourhood of a metropolis. For the last two decades, land transactions, either willingly or under a state policy of acquisition, have increased significantly, particularly in the vicinity of big towns all over India. These land transactions have influenced significantly the geography, economy, society and polity of villages close to cities. Very importantly, these land transactions have induced the process of socioeconomic mobility in the affected areas. There are several studies dealing with mobility in terms of caste and class but there is a lack of studies focusing on mobility induced by land transactions. Departing from the general trend, the present study attempts to focus on mobility as a consequence of the increasing land transactions in the vicinity of an Indian metropolis.

Theoretical and Substantive Contexts of the Study

Village studies in India started much earlier and almost all dimensions of village life have been studied with different foci and perspectives. After the first war of Indian independence in 1857, the then imperial masters felt the need to study India profoundly and meticulously, particularly her villages and social structure, thinking that without knowing Indian society intensively as well as comprehensively, it would be very difficult to control and rule it. They mainly focused on land tenure, castes and communities, the nature of customary law and order and the maintenance of peace. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, much attention was given to the proposal of local self-government, and with the surge of famines, economists started to study the Indian village communities. The

studies already done were far from real sociological observation and they lacked the sociological perspective for understanding the village communities. The tradition of intense village studies in India started with the publication of M. N. Srinivas, *India's Villages* (1955), which was followed by S. C. Dube's *Indian Village* (1955) and Marriott's *Village India* (1955) (Chauhan 1974).

The 1950s were very rich in rural studies and many important studies came into being, such as *Religion and Society Among the Coorgs of South India* (Srinivas 1952), *Indian Village* (Dube 1955), *India's Villages* (Srinivas 1955), *Village India: Studies into the Village Community* (Marriott 1955), *Caste and Communication in Indian Village* (Majumdar 1958), *Caste and Economic Frontiers* (Bally 1958), *The Dynamics of a Rural Society: A Study of the Economic Structure in Bengal Village* (Mukherji 1957) and *A Rajasthan Village* (Chauhan 1967). At the methodological level, most of the studies in the 1950s used the structural-functional approach based on intensive field work and participant observation with an ethnographic method. Structural aspects were more emphasized in these studies. The main concern was to study the current situation in comparison to change.

All these studies do have theoretical underpinnings but are unable to develop a theory of rural social life. The need of the hour is to move towards a more rigorous theoretical understanding of rural society and its changing dimensions. In the current scenario, Indian villages are passing through a phase of transition, which calls for the study of emerging dimensions of change and mobility for understanding the social structure of the village. The new dynamics of Indian villages cannot only be studied by the Functional, Marxian or Weberian models. Perhaps a combination or triangulation of these models, theories and methods would be more useful. To be specific, the present study falls in the domain of the sociology of land transactions and acquisitions. It would be appropriate to review the village studies in the field to underline the relevant issues for enquiry and identify the pertinent concepts and relevant theoretical framework. The context of the present work may be put forward both theoretically and substantively.

Village India has often been described as static and quiescent. The concepts of little community and little republic have frequently been used for analysing Indian rural society. Charles Metcalfe (1832) describes village communities as little republics, having nearly everything they want within themselves and almost independent of any foreign relations – dynasty after dynasty tumbled and many wars occurred but the village community remained the same. Karl Marx (1975:32) also reflected on

Indian society as such, particularly Indian villages. According to him, aggressors came, vandalized and left but Indian society remained the same, untouched by the changes. These observations acted as the point of departure for the sociological understanding of Indian rural life as primarily well settled, stable and with a centripetal system of social stratification.

Naturally, the earlier sociological studies also emphasized this feature of Indian society; the ontological emphasis necessitated the use of logically relevant theoretical models such as functionalism, Indologism and structuralism in the village studies. Consequently, the stability and integration of rural life were celebrated at the cost of discrimination, conflict and change. However, some of these studies took note of the dimensions of cultural mobility by articulating certain concepts, such as sanskritization (Srinivas 1952), universalization and parochialization (Marriott 1955) and enhanced ritualization (Chauhan 1967). They analysed dimensions of change and mobility, but structural change was peripheral to their foci and main theses. Cultural mobility was more notable in these studies.

Though Marx (1975: 29) considered Indian society static, ultimately he said that a process of change was initiated by the British. Taking clues from this analysis, many people studied the changes in the stagnant Indian society brought about by the British, mainly focusing on change and mobility. Mukherjee (1957) studied the dynamics in West Bengal villages using the Marxian framework of analysis. After identifying nine occupational groups, he described how they formed three classes and indicated the mobility in the class structure induced by the British rule. Desai's (1948) study was a side attempt in this regard. While discussing the socioeconomic basis of the rise of nationalism in India, he tried to explain the changes induced by the East India Company's rule, particularly its administrative, economic and agrarian policies, in India. It is, in fact, an extension of Marx's thesis on India that the imperial British rule initiated the forces of change, unconsciously and unwittingly, in a relatively stagnant Indian society, though it aimed at the extraction of wealth and riches to propel industrial capitalism in Britain. Profoundly informed by Marx's insight and standpoint, both researchers started a distinct trend of probing the dynamics of rural society and economy.

Attempting a macro level analysis of the agrarian class structure in India, Thorner (1962) classified the entire agrarian population into maliks (landlords), kisans (cultivators) and mazdoors (wage labourers); he further subdivided each of the categories into subcategories. Dhanagre (1983), in his study of Indian peasants, identified five classes and described the main

ideological and organizational factors that motivated peasants to participate in these movements, along with mentioning the nature of movements and the agrarian classes that participated in them.

On the other hand, some studies followed the Weberian model to study change and mobility. Oommen (1972) studied movement and examined the mobility unleashed by the charismatic personality, informed by the Weberian model. Beteille [2012 (1965)], in his study, *Caste, Class and Power*, examines questions of mobility different from Srinivas' both in context and model. He identifies the bases of social stratifications at a micro level and describes mobility in three aspects – caste (social), class (economic) and power (political). He reveals that an interwoven relationship among them, in a south Indian village, gradually develops into an independent set of economic, political and social forms of stratification. Desai's and Mukherjee's analyses of the changes that occurred in village society after British rule seem to be influenced by the Marxian argument that aggressors came and went but ultimately Indian villages remained the same until the British transformed the bases of the Indian agrarian structure. Even later, Dhanagre (1983) was also predisposed to agree with this reflection.

In order to underline the theoretical, methodological and substantive insights about the aspects and dimensions of mobility in rural India, the studies on mobility have been reviewed along three points; (a) the structural reforms as consequences of the Green Revolution and the land reforms; (b) the penetration of wider processes of social-economic mobility in rural areas through urban expansion and industrialization; and (c) the social implications of land commodification and land transactions.

Land Reforms, the Green Revolution and Social Mobility

There are many studies dealing with the impact of the land reforms and the Green Revolution on rural social structure, and some of them analyse social mobility. There have been some studies on social mobility in the terms of caste. K. L. Sharma (2006) described the three important levels at which mobility takes place in the caste structure as individual, family and group levels. He mentioned three patterns of mobility in class structure as (a) marginally going up, (b) marginally going down, and (c) maintaining the status quo. He highlighted some of the dimensions, contexts, forms and factors of downward social mobility in Indian society. According to him, downward economic mobility is an unplanned consequence of the planned upward social mobility as land reforms enforced a lower status on the landlords.

Andre Beteille wrote long essays on the Indian agrarian social structure and the problems related to land. Joshi (1975) analysed the issues and perspectives of land reforms in India after Indian independence in a systematic way, focusing on the trends and perspectives. From 1988 to 2002, there were 118 studies on agrarian relations. There have been many studies on land reforms that have focused on the necessity of empowering the landless and eroding the power of the traditionally dominant sections of the rural society. There has also been advocacy for “market-mediated” land reform measures for the rural development and collectivization of land through the village (Jodhka and D’souza 2009).

There have been many other studies on land reforms and the Green Revolution that deal with the dimension of mobility, focusing on downward or upward mobility. With the Zamindari Abolition and Land Reform Act (1850), all intermediaries between the state and cultivators were dispensed with and the land was vested in the state. The system of collection of land revenue in the state also underwent a change. The status of cultivator was thus raised to that of independent peasant. The land reforms engendered mobility in the peasants’ social life. A new class of prosperous rich peasantry, comprising of some of the former landowners and a section of newly emerged peasant proprietors, emerged (Srimali 1981). It can be argued that land reforms started social mobility not only in caste status but also in the class status, particularly among the erstwhile lower peasantry.

From land reforms to the Green Revolution, agriculture has been central to the development initiatives of the Indian state (Jodhka and D’souza 2009). Mehta (2011) considers that one of the basic prerequisites for the revitalization of agriculture is the effective resolution of the problems of marginal farmers in rural India. As farming has ceased to be a gainful occupation, the vast bulk of these farmers are deficit cultivators. The market mechanism within the framework of an underdeveloped economy intensifies the process of impoverishment of the marginal farmers.

The studies of the Green Revolution express mobility in terms of the two opposite processes of embourgeoisement and proletarianization. Many scholars have pointed out the negative impact of the Green Revolution. Despite the growth in income, wages and supposedly rising employment, landless labourers continue at rock bottom, below the subsistence level of existence (Patnaik 1987; Ahlawat 1988; Jha 1997; Chakravarti 2001). Like other state initiatives, the Green Revolution seems to have unleashed unequal development and differential processes of mobility that are upward as well as downward.

One of the manifestations of the growing market orientation of agrarian production was the emergence of a totally new kind of mobilization by the surplus-producing farmers, who demanded a better deal for the agricultural sector. Interestingly, these new farmer movements emerged almost simultaneously in virtually all the Green Revolution areas (Jodhka and D'souza 2009). Green Revolution technology is virtually monopolized by the rural labour-hiring classes – the rich and middle peasantry, who are able to generate a surplus above minimum consumption needs – while the majority of the cultivating population, the rural poor comprising small peasants and petty employers, either do not even reach poverty-line levels of consumption or barely do so. Green Revolution technology has done little to close the gap between rich and poor peasants. The rural poor among cultivators who are unable to adopt the Green Revolution technology find a widening gap between their departure from cultivation to labour and the wage rate (Patnaik 1987).

Xaxa (2010), in his article “Social Inequality and Peasantry”, traces the transformation of the peasant society from forces within the structure of the society, viz., forces and the relation of production, and other external forces such as trade and markets. In traditional society, inequality was based broadly on two factors – one was legally/religiously defined and another was based on land. The forces affecting society at large affect the peasantry and the village too. Many of the changes they have undergone have a bearing on the peasantry in terms of inequality within as well as without. The changes within are most conspicuous with respect to social differentiation not only regarding access to land but also in terms of nature, rights and size of land holdings, as well as in terms of attitudes, values, prestige, power, income and ideology, etc. But the rural areas located near metropolitan cities are becoming a part of the expanding city; there, land has become an important source of inequality as the rising price of land has made a few of them wealthy. Others who have less or no land are very poor in comparison, which affects the power structure of the village community.

On the one hand, the linking of agriculture to international agribusiness has led to a switch from food crops to cash crops as there is a growing global demand for crops such as vegetables, fruits, flowers, etc. (Xaxa 2010). On the other hand, land has entered the market and has become just another economic commodity, and peasants are selling their land and consequently becoming landless labourers or shifting to other occupations. Patnaik (1987) talked about the landless agricultural labourer and, according to her, since the 1960s, the Green Revolution area of North India has seen a sharp increase in the proportion of agricultural labourers

in the rural workforce. She describes two sets of circumstances under which the class of wage workers will increase relative to other classes within the rural population; first, the saturation of self-employment opportunities on the dwarf-holdings and second, the fast-growing areas with rising yields, located mainly in the broad wheat belt of Punjab, Haryana, Western U.P. and northern Rajasthan. Here the relative expansion in the class of labourer reflects the strong tendency for the growth of capitalist production. Mohanty (2012), in a study of rural Orissa with special reference to the Sambalpur district, tried to determine the effects of agricultural modernization on land transfer and ownership patterns, and how the modernizing measures have weakened the land, protecting the capacity of small and marginal holders by altering the pre-existing labour relations in the village.

On the basis of the above-discussed studies, it may be argued that both state policy initiatives led to two different dimensions of social mobility in rural India. Land reforms resulted in a mainly downward mobility of the upper castes and the upper classes and an upward mobility of the lower classes and the lower castes. In a way, it was indicative of the structural shift in rural society. The Green Revolution, however, had a different impact on the rural social structure. Studies suggest that it mainly unleashed the downward mobility of the marginal peasants and the lower castes on the one hand, and on the other, pushed the upper-middle and the upper sections of farmers and castes upward. Consequently, it reproduced or increased socioeconomic inequality. Regarding social structure, the land reforms and the Green Revolution had opposite social impacts.

More importantly, the analysis of either downward or upward mobility has not been grounded in any theory of mobility of middle-range or broader theories. The studies seem only to support Marxian theoretical concepts like proletarianization; however, there is scope for explaining downward or upward mobility in a more refined Marxian framework. There is also scope for extending Weber's theory of social stratification for an in-depth understanding of mobility among agrarian classes/strata. The above-discussed studies provide this theoretical insight by pinpointing the ground reality of the nature of mobility as a consequence of the land reforms and the Green Revolution. This gap between theory and fact is considered a point of departure for the present study.

Urbanization, Industrialization and Rural Social Mobility

With the end of the British rule, processes such as democratization, urbanization and industrialization began, and now the process of

globalization has set in. These processes have initiated many socioeconomic changes in rural life. Rural India is undergoing a far-reaching transformation. The narratives of this transformation include dramatic stories of rural resurgence, rapidly expanding rural consumption, acute agrarian distress and the struggle of rural Indians against corporate takeovers of their land. Contemporary rural India is vastly complex and subject to several new forces of change (India Rural Development Report 2012–13).

In the processes of urbanization and industrialization, when the city expands, it expands both geographically and socio-culturally. Chakravorty (2013: 148) points it out succinctly:

The urban growth can take place only in two ways, first by infill, which means by densifying the existing urban space – converting open space as for constructing buildings, altering land use and building higher (large multi-storied apartments), and bringing land on the urban edge into urban use. There are limits to how much population can be accommodated by infill, which is why all cities grow by expansion.

This expansion not only sucks the nearby villages in but has also resulted in major investment in land on the outskirts of different cities. Moreover, residences in nearby cities are being constructed in large numbers and with a great rapidity. The development trend of globalization in the form of increasing markets, industry, construction of commercial enterprises and educational institutes has increased land prices enormously. Thus, land has become a precious commodity and is being exchanged feverishly, particularly near cities and by the side of highways/super-expressways.

Because of urbanization, rural areas are witnessing a change. There are many studies that have focused on the rural-urban nexus. Ghurye, in his study, *Anatomy of a Rururban Community* (1963), articulated the folk-urban continuum. The various characteristics associated with the rural-urban fringe indicate that the fringe society represents a focal point on the folk-urban continuum, with many of the transitional features of the peasant-urban society. It also suggests that there are new types that are only found in the fringe society. Even occupational mobility shows a significant variation in the fringe society (Rao 1959). All the studies, sometimes manifestly and sometimes indirectly, emphasize aspects of change and mobility in rural areas.

In *Rural-Urban Articulation*, Chauhan discussed three dimensions of change: economic, cultural and political. He pointed out three levels of change in the rural economy as primary, secondary and tertiary, and has

analysed the processes of commercialization, production of cash crops and market-oriented tendencies in reference with rural-urban articulation. On the cultural level, he discussed the increasing importance of education and how the village interacts with the city through means of communication and transportation. Along with these factors, political parties and administrative processes have helped villages link with cities. This process of rural-urban interaction is not limited to one way only; rather, the impetus for change is taking place in the village itself. The town is not coming to the country as much as the country is reaching out to the town, leaving behind lots of untidy rural debris. The very existence of the village in a traditional sense is being questioned. Does a contemporary village exist as an area of common living or as a social community? Existing Indian villages resemble an extension of a city rather than a village. Gupta (2005: 752) rightly states:

Villagers are more than willing to desert the fields for a future outside the mud walls of their homes. The village is shrinking as a sociological reality, though it still exists as a space. Nowhere else does one find the level of hopelessness and disenchantment as one does in the rural regions of India.

One may not agree with the comment entirely but it reflects the changing nature of rural India. M.S.A. Rao (1992: 489), while describing three types of urban impact on rural areas, noted that:

The growth of metropolitan cities accounts for the third type of urban impact on the surrounding villages. It is normally found that as the city expands, it sucks in the villages lying on the outskirts. While a few villages are totally absorbed in the process of expansion, only the land of many others, excluding the inhabited area, is used for urban development. Such a policy of urban development explains the existence of "Rural Pockets" in the city area. The landless peasants in these landless villages who get cash compensation may invest in land in far-off places or in commerce or squander the money and most of the villagers seek urban employment.

Though Rao (1992) described the impacts of urbanization, he did not focus much on the changes brought about by the geographical expansion of the city and the different kind of social mobility changing the traditional social structure of the village. He did not consider the details of various implications and impacts of land transactions in terms of mobility, which need to be focused on in order to understand more deeply how the economic phenomenon of land transaction affects the social life of peasants and its various implications. He himself emphasizes that the processes of economic and political change are of relevance to the villages

situated on the fringe of an expanding metropolis, and more studies of the villages placed in similar locations would be necessary to understand further variations as well as the generality of the process of social change resulting from urbanization. The present study tries to locate social mobility in this substantive context.

A rapid urbanization process, with a simultaneous significant development in the economy and industrialization, has augmented considerable urban expansion in India in the last few decades. According to the 2011 census, urbanization in India increased faster than expected. The growth rate of the rural population declined substantially to just 1.2 percent during 2001–11 from 1.7 percent per year during 1991–2001. Urban population growth, in contrast, was about 2.8 percent per year during both periods (Census 1991; 2001; 2011). The noticeably lower growth rate is largely due to a faster decline in rural fertility rates, rural-to-urban migration and the reclassification of villages as urban units (India Rural Development Report 2012–13). The impact of this urbanization is also visible in peri-urban or fringe areas of the city. The fast pace of residential and commercial development is replacing the nearby agricultural and underdeveloped land. The problem of urban sprawl, loss of open vegetation and the general decline in environmental quality can be generally attributed to an increasing population concentrating more people on less land, even as the total land devoted to urbanization expands (Dutta 2012).

Soni (2009) considers the exploitative nature of urban domination over agrarian peripheries as a new colonialism by the urban rich, which has resulted in the commercial exploitation of peasants by unscrupulous profiteers. Lobo and Kumar (2009), in their study of land acquisition in Gujarat, emphasize that though land acquisition has provided many facilities such as education, health, drinking water, etc., its negative impact can be seen in the case of the lack of availability of water for irrigation, employment, market and entertainment, and the decline of employment opportunities is greater in water resource projects since the land under cultivation has declined drastically and the projects provide very few alternatives. The size of land for agricultural purposes has decreased in the recent years. As many as 79 percent of rural households in 2002-03 possessed one hectare of land or less, and about 32 percent possessed less than 0.002 hectares of land (NSS Report No. 493 (59/18.1/1)).

Rapid urban development and changes in the use of agricultural land due to increasing population and economic growth are being witnessed in India and other developing countries. The expansion of cities indicates a transformation of agricultural land for the construction of residential,

industrial and infrastructural commodities, particularly for the development of urban-industrial fabrics. With the growth of urbanization, rural areas are constantly being engulfed into the city. The urban fringe is witnessing many socioeconomic changes induced by land transactions in these areas. Speculators and land developers rush to these areas to buy large portions of agricultural land, which they leave vacant for some time and afterwards sell at a higher price. In the West and the Third World alike, these developments have social and political dimensions. In every case, the changes in the visible landscape are really aspects of the changes in the invisible economic, institutional and social structures underlying them (Leeming and Soussan 1978).

In the developed nations, the accessibility factor also affects fringe agriculture in another very interesting way – it enables the agricultural labour force to gain access to the urban labour market whilst still residing on their farms in the fringe, and perhaps cultivating their land on a part-time basis. There is surprisingly little evidence of this kind of lifestyle in Third World fringes. In some cases, as in Taiwan and Hong Kong, what seems to be happening is that migration to the city tends to depopulate the farm countryside on the fringe at an early stage of the city's expansion; fringe agriculture becomes weak and land is readily available for further urban growth. In the West, residential land use is often the most important aspect with which state or local government enters the fringe, in the form of council housing in England and related provisions of low-rent housing for the urban working class in many other western countries. There are municipal housing estates, middle-class suburbs and upper-class villa areas, but these types of residential land use do not assume the importance in many Third World countries that they have in the peripheries of the western cities. In many Third World city fringes, some of the functions of officially sponsored low-rent housing are discharged in a very different way – by squatter or shantytown settlements (Leeming and Soussan 1978: 5). In India too, residential land use is becoming the most important medium of entering the urban fringe for the government. With the expansion of the cities, more land is incorporated into urban areas for residential purposes.

The above analysis of rural studies shows that there have been ample studies regarding agrarian class structure, social mobility, agricultural problems, landless labourers, the Green Revolution, land reforms, urbanization, industrialization, markets and globalization. Though some of these have also focused on the changing patterns of land use near fringe areas, however, not a great deal of attention was paid to land transactions. There have been only a few sporadic mentions by sociologists. In the

following pages, it may be relevant to assess the empirical situation by reviewing some studies concerning increasing land prices and concomitant changes resulting in land acquisition and transactions.

It may be concluded that the studies on rural-urban interconnections mainly deal with the urban impact on the rural way of life and society at a general level. The studies indicate that due to urbanization and industrialization, changes in economy, society, culture and polity are occurring. Though some of the studies suggest that occupational mobility can be observed in the villages near cities, it can be interpreted that the nature of it is due to the move from traditional caste occupations to more secular and modern occupations. It can also be observed, first hand, that many villagers belonging to different castes have the same or similar occupations in nearby towns. This requires more in-depth and intensive studies on the nature and aspects of social mobility in the aftermath of urban-industrial expansion, particularly in the neighbourhood of the metropolis.

It may sound an orthodox Marxist point of view but the substantive reality, as highlighted by the above-discussed studies, corroborates the thesis that the change in the material conditions of social life (urban contact) introduces alterations in the super structural dimensions of social life. Rural socio-cultural mobility and the change in social structure are two significant features of the socio-cultural system or “the super-structural elements” of rural India. Again, there is a need to connect between theory and the changing empirical situation. This has not been attempted directly or overtly in the selected studies under review. This also reinforces the idea that a study of rural social mobility as the repercussion of urban expansion and market penetration is called for.

Land Prices, Acquisition, Transactions and Social Mobility

In the present context, there are many new factors inducing different kinds of mobility; for example, markets, new occupations, inter-linkages between rural and urban areas, the role of certain people in industrial commercial activities in nearby areas and constant communication with the city. Rural people are becoming occupationally mobile by selling their land and accepting occupations other than agriculture. In the post-independence phase, Indian agriculture experienced a rapid transformation through large-scale irrigation, mechanization, land reforms, the expansion of credit networks and other associated modernizing measures. Understanding the nature, extent and mechanism of land transfers and

their consequent impact on the land ownership structure assumes importance as these are issues of major policy concern (Mohanty 2012).

The economy of fringe villages and, especially, land transactions and the subsequent mobility have so far received scant attention; instead, the focus has been on the village economy and agrarian structure. Besides sociologists and social anthropologists, valuable studies on rural India have also been produced by economists, historians, geographers and public administration specialists. Diverse disciplinary orientations, and the use of different conceptual frameworks and research techniques have enriched the studies on rural dynamics. Some of them have also examined in great detail the social framework of agricultural production and distribution as well as the implications of the “older” structures for the policies of development and change being pursued by the “independent” Indian state. It would be appropriate to appraise some of the relevant studies on land transactions and mobility so that the objectives of the present study may be made pointed and explicit.

Right from the days of early rural sociology in India, issues of land price in relation to socioeconomic aspects have been mentioned, though scantily. While analysing the impact of urbanization and industrialization on rural areas, Srinivas (1978) also described the changes brought about in the Manhalli village after the irrigation facility reached the village. This irrigation facility increased the value of land manifold but in the first few years, many of the small landowners sold a part of their land to raise the money needed to bring the rest under cultivation. F. G. Bailey (1960, second edition) also illustrated what happens when the village is made part of the wider economy of the country and ultimately of the world, and how the village is initiated into the causes of land selling. He enumerates some causes that forced people to sell their agricultural land. Though these studies describe the selling of land by peasants, in recent years, land values have changed and increased prices have motivated peasants to sell their land in large numbers.

Bharat Shrestha (2011), in his study of Kathmandu valley, describes how increasing prices and the demand for land have engulfed most of the land in the valley. In addition to the land mafia, brokers, real estate agencies, housing companies and many farmers were found plotting the land and selling it for housing themselves. The real estate boom in Kathmandu valley has created winners and losers. The winners include the rural landowners who have been able to sell land for inflated prices as well as successful speculators. The losers include all those who must pay inflated prices for housing and suffer from the loss of fertile agricultural land, as well as those who may lose their savings should the bubble burst.

Though Bharat Shrestha (2011) tried to examine the consequences of land transactions on community life and their implications at the policy level, there is a need for more in-depth analysis into their social consequences, especially in the Indian context as India is also witnessing this phenomenon of rapid urbanization and land transactions.

Focusing on the Indian scenario, Sarap (1996) discussed the inactive nature of the land sale market in rural Haryana. According to him, the low turnover in the land sale market may be due to a variety of factors, including the perception of the household that the possibility of buying back a piece of land is low and the higher personal valuation on the price of land since land is the dominant source of livelihood. But in recent years, due to a rapid urban expansion and the changing political economy, land has entered the market as a commodity, especially in those rural areas adjacent to cities. The increased prices of land and the fact that it is no longer a symbol of prestige and status work as motivations for selling it. It has been argued (Sarap 1996) that in a society like India, where the caste and community bonds are very high, such factors may enhance the reluctance to sell land. Further, for instance, the relative or friend of a seller may challenge the act of selling by claiming that he is a co-sharer of the piece of land. But with the weakening of attachment towards land and an increase in individualistic values, these factors have become less influential. In the current scenario, land is frequently sold for money, a better lifestyle or to start a new occupation other than agriculture. Sometimes land is sold because it is jointly owned.

In his study of Tanjore village, Beteille [2012 (1965)] mentioned several reasons why land is sold, but it is mainly because of price ceilings and the fact that people living outside the village, who are not cultivators, are doing the buying and selling. According to him, this sale and transfer of land is to a large extent dependent on forces that do not have their origins in the village. In the villages under study, land sold by villagers under various socioeconomic motivational forces is mostly being bought by non-cultivating outsiders.

The tremendous increase in land prices has become a major motivating force behind land selling by peasants. Urban land prices have reached very high levels (by global standards) and are increasing rapidly; the same is true for rural land prices in many, but not all, settings (Chakravorty 2013). In almost all fringe areas, the increased price of land has motivated peasants to sell their agricultural land at high prices and thereafter to invest the money in occupations other than agriculture. As the value of agricultural output is fully reflected in the amount that agricultural users are willing to pay for the land, a successful bid by public and private