Depeasantization
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Editorial

MEDIATION OF LIFE: PRIESTHOOD OF PEASANTS

The awareness of an impending moral crisis engulfing the peasant communities have a long history. During the late sixties and early seventies the term de-farmerization was used to identify the problems faced by the small farmers in Africa.\(^1\) The onslaught on the farming economy brought by the policy of import-substitution proposed by the developmental ideology was the context of those observations on de-farmerization. However, by the middle of 1980’s a new political term, “de-peasantization”, had evolved to delineate the realities encountered by the small peasants. The studies to examine the changing political economy of farmers contributed to the identification of this term. These studies concentrated more specifically on the changing economic scenario of the small peasants like corn farmers in Mexico in the 1970’s and 1980’s. As the WTO regulations set to determine the fate of agricultural economies around the world

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\(^1\) Ansa Asamoah, *Depesantization of Africa’s Rural Economy: the Ghanaian experience* (Accra: Charities Aid Foundation, 2001)
and the disappearance of small peasants have became a grave phenomenon in agricultural production, the enquiry on de-peasantization became pertinent. For example, in the Philippines around 2.7 million small peasants lost their relationship with agricultural economy in the period of 1994 to 2000 and they migrated to cities and other countries.\(^2\)

De-peasantization in the global south has intensified due to various factors. Evaporation of the public or state support to peasant communities is one of the cardinal reasons for the immediate disappearance. Although the peasant communities produce and bring cheap food products to the market at a price mostly below cost price through hard labor, the social support to this fundamental process to maintain national economy is totally absent. It is a simple fact that industrial centers and urban cities have developed and function only because of the support provided by peasant communities. Furthermore, the industrial revolution and urban centers were made possible without the need of engaging in food production because the peasants produced and supplied cheap food to the industrial class. This generosity was exploited and the ruling communities later reconstructed the political economy of their respective nations to ensure that the peasant communities continue to work with the sole objective of supporting the needs of the industrial class in urban centers.

The green revolution is the second nail placed on the coffins of the rural peasantry. Green revolution accelerated the process of private control over bio-technologies and seeds in the hands of few companies. Small peasants were made to realize that their share in agricultural economy is rather limited. Rapid variations in the seed price in the state of Andhra Pradesh in India explain this scenario. Traditionally small peasants depend upon the government-owned seed processing units to procure

\(^2\) Since only 35 percent of 98 million populations are rural peasant families in the Philippines, displacement of 2.7 actual farmers is a sizable percentage of the peasant communities.
seeds for their agricultural process. But in 2003, to oblige the
guidelines on monetary supply set by the International Monetary
Fund and the World Trade Organization, the state government
closed down 14 out of 24 seed processing units of the Andhra
Pradesh State Seed development Corporation. This space for
seed development was replaced by multinational agro-business
corporations such as Cargill and Monsanto. As a result, seed
prices jumped 1428% between 1991 and 2005. Genetically
modified varieties were sold in 2005 at a price which was higher
by 3555% compared to the median price of 1991. It is thus
evident that the majority of the farmer-suicides in India that
have occurred in this state is not an accident.

International division of labour in food production is the
third reason for the displacement of farmers. Food-aid
programme of the US government named under PL 480 and
other similar policies forced radical changes in the agricultural
production pattern. As an imposed political measure, Third
World governments around the world started to accept cheap
grain from the US producers from 1951 onwards. Since these
exports were subsidized by US federal government funds,
farmers in US were able to dump huge amount of grain for rock
bottom price around the world. By 1965 more than 80% of US
wheat imports were totally financed by US food-aid. As a result
of the control of grain market by dumping cheap grains, US
producers prodded the third world farmers to abandon food
production and move into different areas of agricultural
production.³ By 1970, the US share of world export in wheat,
maize, and soybeans has increased to 35%, 50%, and 90%
respectively.⁴

³ Textile weavers had gone through a similar process during colonialism. To
help develop textile industries in Manchester and other centers in Europe,
Britain suppressed textile production in India by taking total control over
market through tariffs and production regulations.
⁴ Philip McMichael “Peasants Make Their Own History, But Not Just as
They Please…” Journal of Agrarian Change, Vol.8, No.2 and 3, April and
As a result, basic food production in the formerly self-sufficient, surplus producing Third World had ceased and they began to produce for the luxury needs of the northern consumers with produces such as cut flowers, vanilla beans, coco-seeds, and others. However, the prices of these luxury items were at the mercy of the buyers and not the producers. Control on market made sure that no capital accumulation occurs in the rural areas. Rural markets and production thus remained in a subsistence level. Though these depleted rural markets operate within the capitalist framework they have no possibilities for growth. As Samir Amin suggests such market control, leads to “blocked capitalism”.

In recent years, WTO regulations accelerated the process of food export from the north to the south. While import liberalization was made mandatory to be part of the WTO regime, it suggests two different moral yardsticks in allowing subsidy payment to farmers. While public subsidies to the small farmers in the Third World countries were written off as an immoral intervention by the state in the freedom of market, the WTO allowed huge subsidies to be paid to the corporate farmers hailing from the rich Northern hemisphere. This double standard in the moral administration of the international financial agencies assisted the corporate food regimes to reduce the price of the global farm products by as much as 57% below the actual costs. The case of cotton farmers explains this new scenario. In 2001, 25,000 cotton growers in US received roughly 3.9 billion dollars in subsidy payment for producing a cotton

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5 The rhetoric of comparative advantage legitimizes the division of international labour. The unequal distribution of resources, privilege and the unjust control over market deprived the poor farmers from the third world their right to life.

crop that was worth only US$ 3 billion. This in turn enabled them to dump the products in the market for whatever price that pleased them. These subsidies strengthened their maneuvering control over the global agricultural market.

The import of food products with an artificially created market price has devastating impacts on small peasants around the world. Indonesia was rated as one among the top ten exporters of rice before the WTO came into effect. After participating for three years in the WTO regime, Indonesia has emerged as the largest importer of rice in 1998. Subsidies to corporate farmers increased while totally withdrawing any state support to the small and medium farmers in the Third World. The Duke of Westminster receives £350,000 (Pound Sterling) for the 1200 diary cows he owns as a subsidy per year. The European Union provides a daily subsidy of US$2.7 per cow to the dairy farmers in Europe, while around 3 billion people or roughly half the population of the world lives with less than US$2, remarkably less than the subsidy that Europeans are paying for the maintenance of a cow per day. However, the farmers’ income is much less; 1.2 billion of the rural population, the majority being the peasants and agricultural workers, make less than an equivalent of 1 US dollar to cover all their living expenditure.

The WTO regime redraws the agricultural production map within few years after its advent. According to the report from Foreign Agricultural Service of US department of Agriculture, “America exports more meat than steel, more corn than cosmetics, more wheat than coal, more bakery products than motor boats, more fruits and vegetables than household

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7 Devinder Sharma “WTO and Agriculture – The Great Trade Robbery” www.countercurrents.org
8 Devinder Sharma “WTO and Agriculture – The Great Trade Robbery” www.countercurrents.org
9 US corn growers receive US$ 20,000 on an average as subsidies per year and in contrast the Filipino farmer makes hardly US$365 per year from their corn farming.
appliances.”10 As a consequence, producers in the Third World have lost their ability to engage in production. This process is what is described as de-peasantization.

Construction of the neo-liberal ideology rationalized the process of de-peasantization. Although liberating market from any government or social intervention is supposed to be the cardinal virtue of neo-liberalism, subsidies paid to corporations by western governments unravel that governing principle of globalization; the “dictatorship of money”. Whatever ideologies or practices fit to satisfy the ever–expanding thirst for growth of capital is employed in the current process. In the words of the peasant activist Marcos of the Zapatista Movement of Chiapas, “neo-liberalism is the attempt to turn the world into one big mall where they can buy Indians here, women there ...." and he might have added, children, immigrants, workers, or even a whole country like Mexico.11"

The narrative of modernity, however, made it easy for neo-liberal rhetoric to become a commonsense in public consciousness. Modernity was not introduced as an economic or cultural project but as a moral imperative; here, modern is considered as good and therefore is a moral obligation, whereas the traditional represents evil. Modernity thus is a teleological theory and within this narrative, the peasants as a class represent the traditional which needs to be wiped out for the construction of a modern, utopian, and civilized society. This narrative is constructed as a public consciousness that encouraged people to look-down upon peasant communities- if possible, as a cancer to the body of the modern civilized societies. Thus, civil societies are rather insensitive to the struggles of the peasant communities to ensure their right to life. In some cases, civil societies are inimical to the demands of the peasant organizations. Unfolding

10 Statement made by Mattie Sharpless, the then Acting Administrator, Foreign Agriculture Service of the US Department of Agriculture in the Senate Agriculture Committee in 2002. Quoted by Devendra Sharma. Op. cit.
11 Elizabeth Martinez and Arnoldo Garcia “What is neo-liberalism” in Crop watch in www.cropwatch.org
stories of Nandigram in West Bengal, India, explains this
dynamics. The so-called “modern society” instead encourages
peasants to negate their very being and to turn away from their
culture.  

The modernity narrative also made accumulation as a moral obligation. Since prosperity equals good life, any means
to gain prosperity assumed a moral legitimacy. To be poor and
to have no ability to accumulate is a moral sin which invites
eternal damnation. Accumulation is a fetish in modern society.
Production practices that are not oriented towards faster rate of
surplus generation hence are a moral anathema in this logic.

This narrative implies that peasants as a social category
are a moral aberration, and their physical and conceptual
presence is unacceptable to the growth towards modernity.

However, a peasant is one whose economic activity is
informed by an ethical imperative of sustaining collective life.
Not only in the sustenance of the life of people, but of nature as
a whole; the health of the life system of the soil, of trees, and of
water systems are the concern of the peasant community.
Peasants mediate among all organic systems as a mediation of
life. And since they mediate life they assume the role befit to
that of a priest. Religious doctrines presuppose that the priests
are the ones who mediate life as the spirit does. The Holy Spirit
[Ruah] as the breath of the Divine mediates and retrieves life. Mediation of life in essence is the mediation of God, and that is
why the peasants are the Priests in its true sense.

Moreover, the peasants produce not for market but for
the substance of life. Though this is an organizing value of the
peasant communities, it is under threat at the present time. When
production is for the substance of life, production invariably

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12 Marxist narratives also encouraged the same view. In classical Marxism,
peasants are a reactionary class. See Teodor Shanin *Defining Peasants*

13 Genesis narrative suggests that the function of Ruah as breath is to mediate
life. Through breath, the life forms regenerates, reforms in to life; mud
transform into a person.
should adhere itself to the physical limits informed by the needs of consumption. These limits to production run into conflict with the principles of growth that neo-liberalism and modernity proposes. Neo-liberalism therefore suggests that production should be aimed at market alone, and not needs. When production is towards market and the accumulated value is converted in terms of abstract money, production transcends all forms of physical limits. Unlimited accumulation is made possible by transferring resources into the abstraction of “money”. Production process breaks any limits and grows into unlimited levels. The current environmental crisis is only one of the manifestations of this process of making money as a storehouse of value to break the physical limit that may allow unlimited production, growth, and accumulation.

Neo-liberal ideology turned all productions as a market function. Social reproduction is also fetishized as market function. The demand for food security is an ideological construct of neo-liberalism to support the money economy run in favor of the Corporations.

How much is produced is an irrelevant question. Discourse on the productivity of farm land is illogical. Also the construction of superficial statistical measures such as GNP and per capita income by the dominant economic literature to describe people’s welfare is absurd.

How production reinvigorates social cohesion and mediates the lives of all living organisms is the primary issue of concern. Production should become a celebration for reinforcing life.

The peasant in their very being is a counter-narrative to the fetish of money economy. And being a critique of the fetish, they celebrate life - celebrate the life giving potentials of earth and social systems.

De-peasantization thus is not a crisis that few peasants around the world are facing. It is not the moral or political quandary emanated from the suicide of hundred and forty thousand peasants in the past few years, or that a farmer is
committing suicide every 30 minutes in India. Of course, these deaths forced by the neo-liberal economic policies questions the moral legitimacy of the present systems of production and distribution, but more than just the moral question surrounding the peasant communities, de-peasantization is an expression of a deeper crisis of humanity, a crisis in which the constructed fetish of market and money replaces the foundational values of life.

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WE CAN TRANSFORM THE COURSE OF HISTORY

François Houtart

The world needs alternatives and not merely regulation. It is not enough to rearrange the system; we need to transform it. This is a moral duty. In order to understand why, we must adopt the point of view of the victims of this system. Adopting this point of view will allow us to confront reality and to express a conviction, the reality that the whole ensemble of crises which currently afflict us—finances, food supply, water, energy, climate, social—are the result of a

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common cause, and the conviction that we can change the course of history.

**Confronting Reality**

When 850 million human beings live below poverty level, and their number increases, when every twenty-four hours tens of thousands of human being die of hunger, when day after day entire peoples, whole cultures and ways of life simply disappear, putting in peril humanity’s patrimony, when the climate deteriorates to the point that one wonders whether or not it is worth the trouble to live in New Orleans, the Sahel, the islands of the Pacific, Central Asia, or along the coasts of our continents, we cannot content ourselves with speaking about the financial crisis.

Already this latter crisis has had consequences which are more than merely financial: unemployment, rising prices, exclusion of the poor, vulnerability of the middle classes. The list of victims grows ever longer. Let us be clear. This crisis is not the product of some bad turn taken by one economic actor or another, nor is it just the result of an abuse which must be punished. We are witnessing the result of a logic which defines the economic history of the past two centuries. From crisis to regulation and from regulation to crisis, the unfolding of the facts always reflects the dynamics of the rate of profit. When it rises we deregulate; when it falls we regulate, but always in service to the accumulation of capital, which is understood as the engine of growth. What we are seeing today is, therefore, far from new. It is not the first crisis of the financial system and it will not be the last.

Nevertheless, the financial bubble, created over the course of the past few decades, thanks, among other things, to the development of new information and communication technologies, has added fundamentally new dimensions to the problem. The economy has become more and more virtual and differences in income have exploded. To accelerate growth in the rate of profit, a whole new architecture of derivatives was
put in place and speculation became the modus operandi of the economic system. The result has been a convergence in the logic governing the disorders which characterize the current situation.

The food crisis is an example. The increase in food prices was not the result of declining production, but rather of a combination of reduced stocks, speculation, and the increased production of agro-fuels. Human lives were, in other words, subordinated to profit taking. The behaviour of the Chicago Commodity Exchange demonstrates this.

The energy crisis, meanwhile, goes well beyond a conjunctural explosion in the price of petroleum. It marks the end of cheap fossil fuels, which encouraged profligate use of energy, making possible accelerated economic growth and the rapid accumulation of capital in the middle term. The super-exploitation of natural resources and the liberalization of trade, especially since the 1970s, expanded the transport of commodities around the world and encouraged the use of automobiles rather than public transportation, without consideration of either the climatic or the social consequences. The use of petroleum derivatives as fertilizers became widespread in a productivist agriculture. The lifestyle of the upper and middle classes was built on this squandering of energy resources. In this domain as well exchange value took precedence over use value.

Today, with this crisis threatening gravely the accumulation of capital, there is a sudden urgency about finding solutions. They will, however, respect the underlying logic of the system: to maintain the rate of profit, without taking into account externalities –that is to say what does not enter into the accounting of capital and the cost of which must be born by individuals and communities. That is the case with agro-fuels and their ecological and social consequences: destruction by monoculture of biodiversity, of the soil and of underground water and the expulsion of millions of small peasants who then go on to populate the shantytowns and aggravate the pressures to emigrate.
The climate crisis, the gravity of which global public opinion has yet to take the full measure, is, according to the International Group of Climate Experts, the result of human activity. Nicolas Stern, formerly of the World Bank, does not hesitate to say that “climate change is the biggest setback in the history of the market economy.” In effect, here as before, the logic of capital does not take into account “externalities” except when it reduces the rate of profit.

The neoliberal era, which led to the increase of the later, coincided as well with growing emissions of greenhouse gases and accelerated global warming. The growth in the utilization of raw materials and in transportation, as well as deregulation in the ecological sphere, augmented the devastation of our climate and diminished the regenerative capacity of nature. If nothing is done in the near future, 20%-30% of all living species could disappear in the next quarter century. The acidity of the oceans is rising and we can expect between 150 and 200 million climate refugees by the middle of this century.

It is in this context that we must understand the social crisis. Developing spectacularly the 20% of the world’s population capable of consuming high value added goods and services, is more interesting from the standpoint of private accumulation in the short and middle term than responding to the basic needs of those whose purchasing power has been reduced to nothing. Indeed, incapable of producing value added and having only a feeble capacity to consume, they are nothing but a useless mob, or at best the object welfare policies. This phenomenon is accentuated with the predominance of finance capital. Once more the logic of accumulation has prevailed over the needs of human beings.

This whole ensemble of malfunctions opens up the possibility of a crisis of civilization and the risk that the planet itself will be purged of living things, something which also signifies a real crisis of meaning. Regulation, then? Yes, if they constitute steps towards a radical and permanent transformation and point towards an exit from the crisis other than war. No, if
they merely prolong a logic which is destructive of life. A humanity which renounces reason and abandons ethics loses the right to exist.

**A conviction**

To be sure, apocalyptic language is not by itself a sufficient catalyst for action. On the contrary, a radical confrontation with reality like that suggested above can lead to reaction. Finding and acting on alternatives is possible, but not without conditions. It presupposes a long term vision, a necessary utopia, concrete measures spaced out over time, and social actors who can carry these projects and who are capable of carrying on a struggle the violence of which will be proportional to the resistance to change.

This long term vision can be articulated along several major axes. In the first place, a rational and renewable use of natural resources, which presupposes a new understanding of our relationship with nature: no longer an exploitation without limits of matter, with the aim of unlimited profits, but rather a respect for what forms the very source of life. “Actually existing” socialist societies made no real innovations in this domain.

Second, we will privilege use value over exchange value, something which implies a new understanding of economics, no longer as the science of producing value added as a way of encouraging private accumulation but rather as an activity which assures the basis for human life, material, cultural, and spiritual, for everyone everywhere. The logical consequences of this change are considerable. From this moment forward, the market must serve as a regulator between supply and demand instead of increasing the rate of profit for a minority. The squandering of raw materials and of energy, the destruction of biodiversity and of the atmosphere, are combated by taking into account ecological and social “externalities.” The logic governing the production of goods and services must change.
Finally, the principle of multiculturalism must complement these others. It is a question of permitting all forms of knowledge, including traditional forms, all philosophies and cultures, all moral and spiritual forces capable of promoting the necessary ethic, to participate in the construction of alternatives, in breaking the monopoly of westernization. Among the religions, the wisdom of Hinduism in relationship to nature, the compassion of Buddhism in human relations, the permanent quest for utopia in Judaism, the thirst for justice which defines the prophetic current in Islam, the emancipatory power of the theology of liberation in Christianity, the respect for the sources of life in the concept of the land itself among the indigenous peoples of the Americas, the sense of solidarity expressed in the religions of Africa, can all make important contributions in the context of mutual tolerance guaranteed by the impartiality of political society.

All of this is utopian, to be sure. But the world needs utopias, on the condition that they have concrete, practical results. Each of the principles evoked above is susceptible to concrete applications which have already been the object of propositions on the part of numerous social movements and political organizations. A new relationship with nature means, among other things, the recovery by states of their sovereignty over their natural resources and an end to their private appropriation, the end of monocultures and a revaluation of peasant agriculture, and the ratification and deepening of the measures called for by the Kyoto and Bali protocols on climate change.

Privileging use value requires the de-commodification of the indispensible elements of life: seeds, water, health, and education, the re-establishment of public services, the abolition of tax havens, the suppression of banking secrecy, the cancelation of the odious debts of the States of the global South, the establishment of regional alliances on the basis not of competition by of complementarity and solidarity, the creation or regional currencies, the establishment of multipolarity, and
many other measures as well. The financial crisis simply gives us a unique opportunity to apply these measures.

Democratizing societies begins with fostering local participation, includes the democratic management of the economy, and extends to the reform of the United Nations. Multiculturalism means the abolition of patents on knowledge, the liberation of science from the stranglehold of economic power, the suppression of monopolies on information and the establishment of religious liberty.

But who will carry this project? The genius of capitalism is to transform its own contradictions into opportunities. How global warming can make you wealthy! reads an ad in *US Today* from the beginning of 2007. Can capitalism renounce its own principles? Obviously not. Only a new set of power relations can get us where we need to be, something which does not exclude the engagement of some contemporary economic actors. But one thing is clear: the new historic actor which will carry the alternative projects outlined above is plural. There are the workers, the landless peasants, the indigenous peoples, women (who are always the first victims of privatization) the urban poor, environmentalists, migrants, and intellectuals linked to social movements. Their consciousness of being a collective actor is beginning to emerge. The convergence of their organizations is only in its early stages. Real political relationships are often lacking. Some states, notably in Latin America, have already created the conditions for these alternative projects to see the light of day. The duration and intensity of the struggles to come depends on the rigidity of the system in place and the intransigence of the protagonists.

Offer them, therefore, a platform in the General Assembly of the United Nations, where they can express themselves and present their alternatives. This will be a contribution to changing the course of history –something which is must happen if humanity is to recover the space to live and once again find reason to hope in the future.
CATASTROPHE, DEVELOPMENT AND A NEW WORLD

M.P. Parameswaran

The current path of human development is leading the species to a near and certain extinction or at least to barbarism. Global capitalism is on a rampage of the resources of the earth. Resources, especially oil, are getting depleted. The pollution load is increasing. Global warming is not scare mongering. It is a reality. The present prognosis is that, this trajectory will continue for decades. As early as 1972 the Club of Rome report ‘Limits to Growth’ had warned that if we do not change our development trajectory a

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² Limits to Growth (1972), Beyond Limits (1992), Limits to Growth – The 30 year update (2002) – Donnella Meadows, Jorgan Randers, Dennis Meadows, Earth Scan
catastrophe is certain. That if continues. No real change in trajectory has taken place. It is almost certain that whatever we may do today, the catastrophe can no longer be avoided. The existing over all growth patterns can (and will) continue for another two to three decades. That is the way planning is done. However, by that time the resources would have become quite scarce, the pollution load quite large and the climate highly erratic. The food grains production would come down. Food shortages, disease and mutual strife for scarce resources would lead to a catastrophic fall in population, in life expectancy of people and in production of industrial goods. Under such conditions of stress, the behaviour patterns of humans will be quite different. The animal or reptilian instincts in humans which are today kept suppressed by social or collective instincts can come out violently. Indications of this are visible even today. Competition is idolized. Each for himself/herself is the slogan of the day.

It is argued that selfishness and greed are basic human characters, inherited genetically, and cannot be changed. This is a wrong perception. Had there not been collectivity the species would not have survived, or even evolved. Those individuals in the ‘pack’ with a preponderance of reptilian instinct and poor social instincts have failed to survive because the odds were so much against them and only collective action would have saved them. Collectivity or social instinct is as much an evolutionary character as animal level of selfishness.

Similarly the ‘greed to amass wealth’ too is not an immutable law of biology. By and large people amass wealth for security reasons – of self and children. Bulk of the wealth amassed is not for self but for children. Here we are speaking of ordinary citizens and not sick capitalists. In the Soviet Union of fifties and sixties the citizens in general used to feel secure – they were not worried about their own or their children’s future. They never felt the necessity to amass wealth to be passed on to children to ensure their future. One of the reasons for the collapse of the system was that the importance of this feeling of
security was not realized. The leadership systematically educated the people with the desirability and possibility of catching up with and surpassing USA in consumption. ‘Greed’, namely desire for goods which don’t add to their physical or spiritual quality of life, was given more importance than security, sustainability and leisure. Here we are talking about society in general and not isolated men afflicted with avarice. This societal greed is a manufactured one and camouflaged as need. Martha Harnecker says in her book Rebuilding the Left writes:³

“...the US business community set out to radically change the psychology that had built the nation. In the 1920’s US manufacturers were faced with a situation of over production...The dramatic drop in sales could only be met head on if the US people’s psychology could be changed by persuading people to consume more goods. So a huge crusade was launched to turn US workers into a herd of consumers...it was necessary to transform goods that had previously been luxuries for higher income groups into the needs of the lower income groups ...the common man and woman were invited to emulate the rich.... In less than a decade a nation of hard working frugal Americans were made over into a hedonistic culture in search of ever new avenues of instant gratification”

It is argued here that ‘greed’ is not a basic character of humans, that it is a socially engineered one. Greed as a universal social character is a product of capitalism. In earlier times it was simply a disease afflicting a few. And as Gandhi has aptly remarked, “this world has enough to satisfy everyone’s need, but not even one’s greed.” A new society, a new world can be built only on the basis of wisdom to differentiate need from greed.

³ Rebuilding The Left, Martha Hernekar, Zed Books, 2007
Here, a simple criterion can be used to categorize need and greed: whether it contributes to increasing the Quality of Life of the society - both physical and spiritual.

My argument is that a new society, a new world can be built only on the foundation of a new understanding of development or progress, wisdom to differentiate need from greed. Just as greed was introduced into the society through a planned campaign, its removal too requires such a campaign. Ambivalence in this is not acceptable. The traditional left is still under the illusion of ‘abundance’ as the basis of communism and not wisdom. They think that greed is simply a need, which you cannot satisfy today, but can be satisfied tomorrow. This demands a great degree of de-schooling. The untenability of greed emerges out of the simple arithmetic that we cannot maintain a geometric progression in development for ever under conditions of finite resources. This leads us to the necessity of redefining the concept of development itself.

**Development: towards a redefinition**

Inseparably connected with the concept of development is the concept of Quality of Life. A few statements lead to this discussion: *Every living being has to resist death and has to procreate. Humans go beyond this. They want to be consciously happy. So they consciously strive to improve the quality of life.*

The concept of improvement involves measures. Even 'quality' of life has to have a measure. Quality of life of human beings can be expressed in two terms Physical (or material) Quality of Life-PQL and Spiritual (or non-material) Quality of Life-SQL.

Statements about quality of life are valid only for aggregate collectives and not for individuals. Today Human Development Indices are quoted country wise. To apply such statistical parameters to very small groups is meaning less. A population of 20000-30000 could be the minimum size. Up to groups of about a million it makes sense. For very large groups, it glosses over regional and cross-sectional imbalances. An
average quality of life for India does not have meaning. Further, if we want to compare the quality of life of the poorest 20% of Kerala population with the poorest 20% of Bihar, or of Gujarat we have to estimate them separately.

With these understandings we develop the parameters defining quality of life in the following way.

Physical Quality of Life – PQL – is broken down into three constituent elements: Longevity, Emancipation and Sustainability. Spiritual Quality of Life (SQL) too is broken down into three elements: Social, Cultural and Participatory.

**Longevity**

The two relevant parameters are: (i) average life expectation at birth, and (ii) expected average total duration of morbidity in the life time. We define a quantity called effective life span or disability adjusted life years (DALY) as:

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\text{Effective life expectation} = \text{Biological life expectation} - \text{life time integrated morbidity period.}
\]

For developmental planning what is important, are temporal values: how it has improved over a period of time, what has been the impact of specific measures taken. On the other hand same time spatial figures can help us to compare the efficiency of use of natural resources by various people as well as to intervene to correct imbalances.

The life expectancy of most of the nations has increased over the 12 year period, from 1990 to 2002, but in some African countries it has remained stagnant or even come down. In many countries the increase is only marginal.

One can, if necessary, convert longevity from years into a numerical index, combine it with different other indices and generate composite indices. However it will not help us to plan future activities and hence is not attempted.

**Emancipation**

Humans are required – forced – to earn a lively hood. Nobody likes to be forced. They should enjoy working. Work
should not be alienating. Eight hours work, eight hours rest, eight hours sleep: this was the May Day slogan of the workers, a century and half ago. They have not changed it. In theory, the 'hours' of work should include the hours of travel to and from the work place, overtime hours, and the recess-hours. The average working day for most of the urbanites especially in metropolitan towns is 10 to 11 hours. They do not get, virtually any time to enjoy culture. Even the rest time is tense. During the morning hours they are busy with preparation for departure to work place. In the evening they may get, at most about a couple of hours for truly human occupations. Assuming that 8 hours are to be set apart for sleep and rest and 6 A.M. to 6 or 7 P.M. as unavoidable time for work [an alienated time], one can calculate the genuinely free time at the disposal of the individual which he/she can spend as he/she wish. This calculated as a fraction of wakeful hours – here 16 hours-can be termed as 'emancipation index'. This can be fine tuned by giving greater than unity weightages for heavy and unpleasant work. The weightages can be collectively agreed upon. For example:

- Highly creative and enjoyable work $= 0.80$
- Light office work $= 1.00$
- Heavy manual work $= 1.20$

Today an average Bombay factory worker hardly gets two hours for himself/herself. An average New Yorker gets 3 to 4 hours. One can calculate the average for an entire population. Here too one can make country wise – spatial – comparisons or temporal comparisons. Here one tendency can be noted: as urbanization and modernization advances, the availability of free time or own time tends to fall down.

Advancement of productive forces, instead of emancipating us from forced labour is in fact increasing it, binding us more and more to work place.

**Sustainability**

As Marx has often repeated we are only temporary possessors of this earth and that we have to pass it on to future
generations in an improved condition. If we deplete the minerals and ores, if we consume all the fuels, if we pollute the environment and create irreversible climatic changes- then we are breaking our mandate. We will pass on to succeeding generations an increasingly impoverished earth. The only way of escape is to achieve cent percent recyclability and, sequester the polluting gases from the environment. Further, for energy source we have to shift over to the only inexhaustible source- the sun. All these are known. The degree of sustainability achieved by a society can be measured in terms of the degree of success in this.

Social Quality

There are certain things, which every society considers to be desirable and certain others undesirable. Through the concept of social quality we are trying to indicate some way to quantify them. Every society wants maximum reduction in murders, suicides, in theft and robbery, in violence against women, in abuse of children, in child labour, in bribe and nepotism, in work evasion, in sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS, in consumption of narcotics and intoxicants, in caste-religion-politics based enmities and violence, in the necessity of increased investment on internal and external security and in other social evils.

A society in which all these are coming down continuously is increasing its social quality of life. Reduction in one does not, fortunately, demand increase in another. One can measure the reduction in each. Combining them into a composite index does not offer any better guide to action. The steps to be taken to reduce most of them may be common. For example, USA is the richest and the most advanced nation in the world. However, in all the above parameters it is very backward. It has got maximum number of persons in jails per 1000 population, its per capita expenditure on police, jails, weapons and defense is the highest in the world, it has got one of the highest crime rates amongst all countries. It lives in constant
fear of terrorism and attack; it feels that the entire world is against it. Compare this with the situation in erstwhile USSR forty-fifty years ago. The ordinary people had no anxiety, about self, about children, present or future. Every body had employment, food, cloth and a place to live in. Crime rates were minimum. True jails, were full but not from crimes against ordinary people. They were mostly political prisoners – an undesirable situation. The rulers lived in constant fear. And this leads to its downfall. One can surmise that democracy with full-fledged social security and wisdom to differentiate need from greed can bring down most of the social evils.

**Culture**

Humans distinguish themselves from animals in that it has got articulate speech, languages, ability to read and write, it has got songs, dance, painting and all other fine arts. It has sports of various types. When Marx hoped that human kind is on the threshold of liberation, what he meant was that with the advancement of science, technology and productive forces, humans are becoming increasingly free from animal limitations of keeping alive and getting emancipated to enjoy the truly human avocations mentioned above. Thus the cultural enjoyment of a society is one of the indications of its high quality, spiritual quality, of life. This can be quantified, crudely though, in the following terms.
- High literacy rate
- Longer years of education
- Longer hours of reading
- Increasing participation, passive or active, in arts like singing, dancing, acting, including viewing T.V. or theatre.
- Increasing participation in sports

The first two are to be ensured directly by the society. The rest requires, to begin with increasing free time – a high level of emancipation. But that alone will not be sufficient. This time should be used for reading, for listening music, for viewing sports and the like and not for simply sleeping or drinking.
Participation

Humans have to produce goods and services to exist. For this they have to interact with each other, organize themselves into a system and engage in productive activities. Children, invalids and elders are exempted. Rest have to participate. No self-respecting adult would like to live permanently on charity. Participation in economic activity is not only a material necessity for them. True, it is a material necessity of course and this participation should give them a just share of the social product, increasing economic equity. But participation is, also, a spiritual necessity, especially in social – political affairs. Economic participation can be measured, though inadequately, through the ratio of the average income of the poorest pentile (20%) and the richest pentile or through Gini coefficient. Participation in socio-political life is more difficult to quantify. One way is to assess the average time spend by each citizen in activities which are not directly related to self or family – for example in arts and sports clubs, in organizing library-reading rooms, in village councils and panchayat, in class and mass organizations and so on. Reduction of full timers' in such activities and increase in the quantum of voluntary work is a good measure of social participation.

From Desirability to Reality

All these are desirable. But today the global society is systematically pulled into the abyss of destruction and extinction. How can we change the present trajectory? It is not possible to have a global shift in the trajectory at one go. The world consists of hundreds and thousands of distinct socio-geographical entities. Today they are all bound up, linked together, into one global economy. The first step is to de-bond or de-link. Actually, each country should have freedom and autonomy to chart its own trajectory of progress. Today they don’t have it. Further, most of the countries are ruled by segments of, what one can call the global elite or the global
ruling class. It is unrealistic to imagine that they will take initiative for de-linking. They are the people who forced the current linking or binding. It is to be understood that de-linking from global economy does not mean total isolation. We will later re-link with kindred economies in a mutually beneficial manner. One can think of hundreds of bilateral and multilateral linkages amongst the developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. Essentially it means shutting the doors to industrialized countries, especially USA- a third world sanction against first world.

Even this is a dream today. The third world governments will not do this. Here in comes the importance of de-linking or de-bonding within a country, within a state. One can think of developing local communities and local economies developing, increasingly more autonomously, or in other words increasingly de-linking from the national and global economies. A variety of such experiments are going on in different parts of the world. Local Exchange and Trade Systems, Local Currencies, Fair Trade, People to People Trade are some of those initiatives. All are attempts to free the local economy and community from the clutches of global economy. The productive capital can be de-linked from the global casino capital, at least locally. Capitalistic formations developed within the feudal system at isolated points and later coalesced into a new system. Similarly, the new society, the new world cannot come into existence at one stroke globally or even nationally. It cannot be built up after destroying the existing world. It has to germinate and grow up at discreet locations within the existing world. The only difference is that, now it will not be a spontaneous process, but a planned and guided one. For this to be so we should have a shared understanding of the essential features of the new global society and the new world. The cardinal features of the new or alternative world should, according to me, the following

- Gradual abolition of private property in land and other means of production and bringing them under social ownership. No exploitation.
● Increasing abundance of the means of subsistence.
● Increasing equality
● Decreasing difference between town and country, between industry and agriculture and restore nature’s metabolism – rurbanization.
● Emancipation from all forms of alienation
● Continuous improvement in the health of the land which is to be passed on to the next generation – sustainability

These objectives can be achieved only at national-state level and that too only partially. Ultimately they will become stable only at global levels. There will have to be a transition period which could be quite long, zig zag with ups and downs. There have to be certain indicators which reassure us that we are moving in the proper direction. They could be:
- Increase in life expectation, decrease in morbidity and infant mortality rate.
- Continuous reduction in income inequities, reduction in Gini co-efficient.
- Increased democratic participation of the people in running the affairs of the society.
- Improved status of women.
- Security for children and the marginalized, for all.
- Reduced use of energy for achieving the above.
- Reduction in the rate of emission of greenhouse gases and ultimately reduction in concentration of the same in the atmosphere.
- Continuous reduction in the unnecessary transport of goods and travel of humans.
- Increasing local self sufficiency.
- Continuous reduction in the relative spending on armaments, police, judiciary, prison etc.
- Continuous reduction in the production of goods and services with low, zero or negative welfare values.
- In short, continuous increase in Physical and Spiritual Qualities of Life.
The general structure of the new, alternative world will be different from the present one. Nation states will lose their importance. The human society will become a global network of associated producers. In this, each association will be at the centre surrounded by a number of federating circles, which are not hierarchical, but horizontally related. To make such localization possible, the Research and Development work in Science and Technology will be so oriented as:

- to extract solar energy cheaply and abundantly.
- to convert anything into a resource, to do away with the concept of waste
- to sequester green house gases from the atmosphere.
- to make small scale production both efficient and economic.

Local economies have to be built up, based on the above. Local production of increasing number of goods and services, local marketing, local pride, local alterative currency, local and inter-connected security measures will have to be encouraged. Such economies are to be experimentally built up wherever possible. They will form the base on which future society can be built. They will also function as forts of resistance against the onslaught of globalised neo-liberalism. The left and the progressives are engaged in a struggle against neo liberal globalization, throughout the world. Large number of them comes together every year at the World Social Forum. Many among the left, including the communists believe that, currently there is no other option than to enter into the world market and fight it out there. Many even theorize that without going through full-fledged capitalism, which alone is capable of developing productive forces, it is not possible to think about socialism, that the failure of the 20th century experiments was due to attempts of short circuiting capitalism. This is a dangerous situation—the communists clamoring for capitalist path. This path will eventually lead humanity to barbarism or extinction not to socialism. Building up small islands of the socialistic societies is possible and this should be a major task of the left and
progressive movements. Local economy movement is, also, a counter attack on globalization.

The battle ground for such a counter attack has to be the place where the enemy is situated - the Market. That is his forte. We have to attack him at the local market- the village and the town market. We can use price, quality, education, localism, patriotism and other means to oust the neoliberals from our markets. Yes, boycott is a powerful weapon. The left and progressive forces have to realize the great potential of boycott and local movement.

Who and How?

The question arises: who is the subject for change? Obviously it cannot be limited to the traditional working class – from modern industries. It has to be a broad coalition of classes. The experience of Latin American Left is important in this. The New Left in Latin America is characterized by:

i) Plurality of struggles and articulation of decentralized forms of organization.
ii) Multiplicity of social bases and political agendas.
iii) Prominence of Civil Society
iv) Reformism as against revolution
v) Deepening Democracy

Perhaps, the most important new-left experiment is that of Venezuela. Hugo Chavez with Fidel Castro constitute the most resolute and consistent opposition to neo-liberalism and US hegemony. Neither of them came from communist movements. Castro took the armed route to revolution. Later he became a Marxist and a Communist. Chavez has an army background and after failing in revolution through armed action took the democratic route and succeeded in it. All the Latin American left and centre-left governments have come to power through popular elections. Chavez declares that he is not a Marxist and hastens to add that he is not an anti-Marxist either. His trusted lieutenants being ex-army colleagues, he seems to be aware of possible aberrations and to resist such aberrations he
had started building up neighbourhood groups called Bolivarian circles. This is an experiment similar to what was undertaken in Kerala, from the early nineties. These NHG’s (Neighbourhood Groups) in Kerala, India were conceived as schools of direct democracy.

Countries like Guatemala, El Salvador, Haiti, Dominican Republic etc. have strong left – centre – left movements. The overall perspective of new left in Latin America and elsewhere can be expressed as democracy and plurality.

However plurality and multiplicity should, ultimately, result in a coherent, directed force capable of changing the global, capitalistic trajectory of development. This focusing requires an ideological lens, an ideology which accepts plurality and multiplicity. This ideological lens can be provided by,

(i) A concept of development based on satisfaction of needs, rejection of greed and constant improvement in the Quality of Life.

(ii) The realization that revolution is the endpoint of a long period of evolution or reform. The essential elements of the new society must be developed and extended within the existing society itself, that today the agenda is one of creation and not of destruction.

(iii) ‘Democracy’ is meaningful only if it is participatory, that is only when the distinction between civil society and political parties become irrelevant. This is possible only in small scale.

(iv) So, change gets initiated at ‘local society’ level and not at national or global level. The starting point is the strengthening of local economy through a process of global knowledge and skill sharing and through R and D efforts in making small powerful, on the one hand and on the other hand being able to boycott foreign goods which have only vanity value or destructive value.
(v) The vision of the change world will be a network of horizontally linked local economies, with increasing local self-sufficiency, with decreasing necessity of travel and transport and ever increasing sharing of knowledge and culture.
CAPITALISM creates its own gravediggers: just as socialism is understood to emerge out of the social contradictions of capitalism, so ecological socialism emerges from its ecological contradictions. Conceptualising ecological socialism thus begins with identifying the central driving ecological contradictions, and specifying their conditions and potentials. Clearly the ecological crisis of capitalism creates different conditions and different agents for transformation. With contradictions between capital and labour the focus is on the relationship between dominant and subordinated classes, whether it is to seek domination of one by the other, or to devise compromises, or to engineer revolt that supersedes such divides. With contradictions between capitals, the focus is on establishing geopolitical frameworks that enable

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players to act for the ‘general’ interest of capital rather than for sectional interests.

With ecological crisis, diagnoses and prescriptions centre on the ecology-society confrontation, and how it may be managed or superseded. Schools of thought on how to address ecological crisis turn on this nature-society dualism, and fall into three broad camps. Using Harvey’s formulation, the first approach assumes the possibility of continuing to dominate nature and to produce limitless ‘conucopia’. As with welfarism, capitalism saves itself from itself. The second approach reverses the nature-society nexus, putting nature in control, subordinating society in a new-Malthusian imposition of ecological limits. The third position posits a dialectical relationship between nature and society, where both act-on and condition each other.

The first position approximates to ‘ecological modernisation’, where it is assumed that a new ecologically-sensitive capitalism is reachable. The second position is aligned with the ecological sufficiency approach, which requires society to live within ecological limits. The third approach offers the possibility of ecological socialism, ‘free from domination whether of society or nature’. These positions produce distinct interpretations of the question of capitalist growth, and thus of the capital-nature relationship.

Ecological modernisers define capitalism as infinitely malleable. Given the right conditions, production for profit can be ecologically sustainable. Accumulation can be decoupled from ecological degradation and capitalist growth can serve ecology. Whilst there is disagreement on what conditions are required, there is consensus across ecological modernisers that the right conditions can render capitalist growth commensurable with ecology. In this scenario society dominates nature, but to the benefit of both. The positive sum relationship is said to offer

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a new pathway for capitalist modernity, where economy serves ecology, and ecology serves economy.

Far from capitalist growth being seen as a barrier to ecological sustainability, growth is embraced as the engine of ecological modernization. Only if capital is accumulated can the funds be generated to invest in new eco-sensitive ways of doing things.

Accordingly, for ecological modernisers, the world’s ‘ecological front-runners’ are the high-income high-growth industrialized countries that now lead the way to ecological modernity. It is in the Global North, in countries such as Germany and Japan, that ecological modernity is emergent. In these contexts re-geared technology, re-grounded markets, eco-sensitive political institutions create a cross-societal shift, for instance to renewables, eco-pricing, and to ‘green’ states, movements and cultures.

Advocates of ecological sufficiency see capitalism as producing material products, fixed entities with a specific ecological impact. Nature, similarly, is interpreted as a fixed entity, governed by eco-systemic laws. Within the bounds of these laws, for instance in relation to regenerative capacity, global nature is configured as a fixed stock of material. The production of goods requires a specific quotient of material and energy, directly sourced from the biosphere. Whether under capitalist or not, production proceeds at direct cost to ecologies: one wins while the other loses, and the society-nature relationship is irreducibly zero sum\(^3\).

As a program for action, ecological sufficiency obliges us, at the very least, to reduce growth and to contain capitalism: given that the production of whatever kind is understood to have ecological impacts, the imperative is to scale-down consumption, and this means delimiting the reach of capital.

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The goal, ultimately, is a closed-loop, steady-state society. Exemplars are sought amongst low-consuming ecologically sufficient communities, primarily in the Global South, and with forms of labour that nurture and nourish nature rather than dominate it. These ecological reproducers generate new social models grounded in conservation and reduced use, with an embracing of small-scale, locally-based technologies, along with a neo-Malthusian emphasis on reducing population growth.

Ecological socialists see capitalist society as governed by socio-ecological relations of domination and subordination. Capital is understood as a relation rather than a ‘thing’: it only exists insofar as surplus value can be appropriated from labour and nature, and thus is an expression of ruling class power over its subordinates. Accordingly its value is purely relational – defined as exchange value rather than use value.

For ecological socialists the production of surplus value is a process that exploits both natural resources and labour power: ‘commodities, like all use values, are products of both labour and nature, and because labor is itself an interaction with nature, the production and exchange of commodities is both a social (people-people) and a metabolic (people-nature) relation’⁴. The commodity, and the capital it accumulates, is thus conceptualized an ecological as well as a social relation. Importantly, ecological impacts are not then conceptualized as an externality of surplus accumulation, but as its essence. Capital cannot accumulate without creating ecological crisis, local at first, in the earliest days of commodity production, then displaced to peripheries, but now immediately and irrevocably global⁵.

From this perspective the cause of ecological crisis is capital itself. As a socio-ecological relation that enables

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accumulation, capital and the commodity form on which it depends must be superseded. With the end of capitalism, and the coming of ecological socialism, the main cause of ecological degradation is removed. In its place, a socialist system of production for need rather than for profit will by definition be ecocentric. Freely associated labour, producing ‘fruitful use value’ (or usefruct) for the commons, must be embedded in ecologies if it to meet needs, as against consumerist wants\textsuperscript{6}.

We may, then arrive at an approximation of the three models, and their principal divergences, as summarised below.

**Runaway capitalism: three models**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Solution</th>
<th>Vehicles</th>
<th>Policy</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ecological Modernization</td>
<td>Industrial Modernity, North and South</td>
<td>Northern post-industrial modernity – adapting capitalism</td>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>Renewables</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ecological sufficiency</td>
<td>Exceeding ecosystem limits, especially Northern</td>
<td>Scale-down with Southern models – containing capitalism</td>
<td>Ecological reproducers</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Local communities</td>
<td>Reduced use</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Leave it in the ground</td>
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\textsuperscript{6} Kovel, p. 268.
| Ecological socialism | Domination of exchange value, commodification and profit drive | Commons, production for ecocentric value – replacing capitalism | Freely associated labour, Fruitful use value | Re/production for ecocentric use | Meeting need not profit |

**Ecological modernization**

The ecological modernization approach is the dominant approach to ecological crisis. Coined by Joseph Huber and Arthur Mol, it incorporates sustainability approaches that assume capitalist growth patterns can be maintained provided they are regearred to ecological frameworks. In some versions, such capitalist interventions secure a form of ‘natural capitalism’, nothing less than a new ‘industrial revolution’, where ecological values are internalised into the inner workings of capital accumulation, such that one becomes indistinguishable from the other. The approach is nicely evoked in Suzuki’s call for ‘making money like a bee: doing business without doing harm’.

Models of ‘reflexive modernization’, as advocated for instance by Ulrich Beck, should also be positioned with ecological modernization. Beck is sharply critical of the ‘metaphysical’ belief in the capacity of modernity to solve its own problems, in the ‘optimism of control’ very much in evidence with ecological modernization. Yet both ‘first

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modernity’ and the required ‘second modernity’ subsume and transform ecologies: human society dominates nature in risk society, and through reflexivity, just as much as it does under industrial society. Despite clear differences, reflexive modernization shares with ecological modernization a belief in capitalism’s adaptive capacity. Beck contends high-income societies have passed into a ‘second modernity’ forced to address the ‘side-effects’, especially the ecological side-effects, of ‘first modernity’. In positing a disjuncture in modernity, Beck argues for multiple modernities, rejecting the notion of a linear pathway. The solution is a modernity more attuned to its side-effects, a precautionary society.

Across these approaches the shared assumption is that what is needed to address ecological crisis is not an alternative to capitalist modernity, but an alternative capitalist modernity. Whether the alternative simply corrects a ‘structural design fault’, as Mol puts it, or engineers a wholesale reconstruction as favoured by Beck, the prescription is much the same. Ecological modernization re-masters nature by managing it, whether through control or reflexivity.

The Stern Review on the economics of climate change is perhaps the clearest recent manifestation of ecological modernization at work. Defining climate change as an externality of production, the review assumed that the most effective way approach is to internalize it. By giving greenhouse gas emissions a monetary value, the market would reduce carbon intensity by encouraging the development and take-up of technology, decoupling growth from emissions. In the crucial

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energy sector, all hopes rest on consumer sensitivity to price signals, and technical capacity to de-carbonise.

**Ecological sufficiency**

Rather than asking how capitalist expansion can be maintained by transforming nature, ecological sufficiency begins with ecological limits, asking how society can live within them. Likewise, rather than devising alternative capitalist modernities can reshape ecologies, the ecological sufficiency approach asks how ecologies should shape societies. Rejecting the assumption of limitless growth, ecological sufficiency also therefore rejects the assumption of progress through productive expansion. In this respect the sufficiency perspective is part of a broader ‘post-developmentalist’ critique of development ideology. Rather than constructing alternative developmentalist ideologies, post-developmentalist reject the idea of development itself, embracing alternatives to development that build on eco-centric social relations.

The concept of ecological limits was popularised in the late 1960s principally in terms of resource exhaustion, an issue directly addressed in 1972 by the Club of Rome Report ‘Limits to Growth’, which proposed responding with precaution and conservation. Lovelock’s Gaia hypothesis of 1972 translated the limits model, viewing the planet as a living thing, that humanity can either render sick or healthy. As a living entity, Lovelock argued, the earth has certain needs: as long as humans place their needs above planetary needs the earth will suffer. More recently Lovelock has identified climate change as the clearest manifestation of this nexus: our ‘way of life encroaches upon the domain of the living earth…. Now it is changing, according to its own internal rules, to state where we are no longer welcome’. The only option is to cease extraction and pollution. The concept was then later deployed through Schumacher’s
theologies and cultures

notion of ‘natural capital’, a metaphor for earth’s stock of natural wealth that is consumed at humanity’s peril\(^\text{15}\).

For some, the challenge to live within limits is posed in terms of technological capacity. Lovelock, for instance embraces nuclear fission as a potential circuit-breaker under climate change. Schumacher, of course, poses the possibility of social reorganization, a literal scaling-down. The Erhlichs presented human impacts as a function of technology, population and affluence, with a strong emphasis on population, thus re-engaging Malthus. In 1991 they argued that global warming made it especially urgent to be ‘reducing the scale of the whole human enterprise’: rejecting blind faith in technology, they argued for an end to population growth, and a shift from affluence to quality of life founded on environmental security\(^\text{16}\).

More recently, in his magisterial account of societies facing ecological limits, Diamond argues that ecological impact is simply ‘a product of two factors: population, multiplied times impact per person’\(^\text{17}\). Collapse is precipitated by over-population and over-consumption of resources, caused by short-termism and non-ecocentric value systems. Diamond argues that provided contemporary societies institute effective ecological forward planning and embark on a rejection of consumerism, we can afford to be optimistic.

While ecological modernization uses efficiency to save growth from ecological impact, ecological sufficiency targets growth directly. Sachs explicitly frames post-developmentalism in terms of a rejection of efficiency in favour of sufficiency. Pointing out that the ecological benefits of increased efficiency are cancelled-out by increased growth, Sachs stresses the necessity for growth restraints, adding ‘what really matters is the


overall physical scale of the economy with respect to nature\textsuperscript{18}. A similar scenario obtains today, with the emphasis on reducing ‘carbon intensity’ of growth rather than directly reducing growth itself: a model that assumes intensity can fall at a faster rate than growth. Sachs uses Herman Daly’s image of an over-loaded ship: ‘even if the cargo on a boat is distributed efficiently, the boat will inevitably sink under too much weight’, arguing that logically, sufficiency must set the boundaries for efficiency, otherwise we exceed ecological limits.

Eco-feminism, a variant of post-developmentalism, deepens the critique by identifying developmentalism as patriarchal, and post-developmentalism as necessarily anti-patriarchal. Here there is a celebration of eco-sufficient modes of living, especially as experienced by women. Bennholdt-Thomsen and Mies for instance, align ecofeminism with a ‘subsistence perspective’, where peoples live autonomously of commodification, and therefore are embedded with living ecologies outside of the ‘regime of wage labour’\textsuperscript{19}. In these contexts ecologies are embedded in a commons to be nurtured, rather than as a resource to be exploited. Therefore, instead of being subsumed by the market and the drive to accumulation, subsistence workers are subsumed by ecologies. Salleh, likewise, privileges a line of antagonism between eco-centric ‘holding’ or metabolic labour, which includes women’s and subsistence labour, and instrumental productivist labour. Where the former exists in a metabolic interdependence with ecology, the latter exists in confrontation with ecology: the former produces ecological value, the latter patriarchal value\textsuperscript{20}.

Ecofeminism looks to a time when humanity expressed its embeddedness in nature: Shiva and Mies look forward to a time when ‘Man’s domination over nature – the principle that has guided Northern society since the Renaissance – is replaced by the recognition that humans are part of nature, that nature has its own subjectivity’.

Ecological sufficiency has its roots in a Northern disenchantedment with scientism, along with a Southern revolt against post-colonial developmental states. In Northern contexts it can drive a conservationist ethic, of holding natural landscapes ‘in trust’; in Southern contexts it can embrace social formations that nurture living environments against developmentalist projects. In both there may be a populist logic, that is amenable to reaction, but also may be open to possibilities of ‘radical democracy’.

At the international level the ecological sufficiency approach is perhaps most clearly reflected in the Living Planet Index: created by the World Wildlife Fund in 1998, the LPI calculates global regenerative capacity and measures how far it is being exceeded by global consumption. The global footprint model showed consumption pressure exceeding regenerative capacity in 1975; by 1997 pressure exceeded capacity by one third.

**Ecological socialism**

Accounts of the field of political ecology often confine themselves to discussing two dominant approaches – ecological modernisation or ‘sustainability’ approaches, and ecological sufficiency, or ‘radical’ green approaches. Ecological

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23 See Dryzek 1997.
socialism differs from both these approaches in seeking to liberate agendas both from the logic of capitalism, and from the assumption of natural limits. The ecological crisis is viewed as a confrontation between capitalist accumulation and the limits of its own making: in this respect ecological limits are created by capitalism. To express it differently, ecological limits are constructed in the dialectic between capital and nature. They occur as a result of the exploitation of nature that inheres in capital itself, and generate a metabolic rift between capitalist society and nature that can only be healed with the passing of capitalist accumulation.

Just as the dialectic between capital and labour produces and confronts limits in terms of the capacity to reproduce labour power, so in the capital-nature dialectic capitalism encounters its ecological limits. The dialectic between capital and labour produces changing prerequisites for labour power – in one period, the capacity to work to the factory whistle may be important, in another the capacity for collaborative creative thought, for instance. Likewise, quite different ecological limits are encountered by successive forms of capitalist accumulation: in one period the exhaustion of nitrogen may be central, in another, access to uranium. In this vein Smith argues the mode of production produces nature, with capitalism transforming nature into exchange value: he thus moves from a nature-society separation, to social relations with nature, and the resulting ‘production of nature’.

An emphasis on the historically-constituted character of ecological limits allows for a periodisation of ecological crisis. Redclift for instance stresses the different ways in which ecological degradation occurs – in one instance through ‘primitive accumulation’, in another though ‘industrial accumulation’. Van der Pijl uses a similar approach,

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distinguishing a third mode of accumulation, ‘intensive’ accumulation, characterised by deepened commodification and an exponential speeding-up of commodity circulation. In this latter, ‘intensive’ scenario capital erodes ‘social and natural substratum’ on which accumulation depends. With the strengthened discipline of capital beyond the workplace, the 'effort of work' is intensified and wider processes of reproduction are threatened, whether delivered through the household or the state. These pressures dovetail with the advancing exhaustion of the biosphere, as the discipline of capital intrudes further into the natural world. As the 'substratum' of livelihood is whittled away, socio-ecological crisis subsumes all other social conflicts, translating anti-capitalism into a 'struggle for survival'26.

Under a post-capitalist arrangement, different social imperatives will obtain, and different kinds of limits would emerge. Marx pointed to a communist society where the metabolic rift between society and nature, created by capitalism, would be healed. Within such a society ecological limits would be superseded through an immersion of nature and society, one into the other. In a passage that has often been quoted, Marx pointed to ‘the consummate oneness of man with nature – the true resurrection of nature – the naturalization of man and the humanism of nature both brought to fulfillment’27. In Marx’s formulation, under communism the social control of nature means the natural control of society, and vice versa: they are indistinguishable.

Here, how nature is controlled becomes the key to ecological socialism. Capitalism has engineered ‘the production of nature at the global scale’, placing human society ‘squarely at the centre of nature’: but, Smith insists, ‘...the idea of control over nature is a dream. It is the dream dreamt each night by

capital and its class, in preparation for the next day’s labour. Truly human, social control over the production of nature, however, is the realizable dream of socialism.\(^{28}\)

The key issue here is the question of becoming: if ecological socialism is understood as a transitory period, how does it bridge the ecological breakdown of capitalism with the birth of resurrected nature in communist society? One way of envisaging the transition is to draw a distinction between the relations and forces of production, arguing that once productive forces have been liberated from capitalist relations of production, they can be deployed for socio-ecological values rather than for private gain.

The formulation is not uncommon amongst ecological socialists. Smith argued for it when he wrote *Uneven Development* in 1984, stating capitalism ‘provides the development of the productive forces necessary for the egalitarian production and distribution of social wealth’.\(^{29}\) A version surfaces in Callinicos’ 2003 *Anti-Capitalist Manifesto*, where he looks to large-scale public investment in renewables and transport, within a globally-planned equitable mitigation strategy, to address climate change, defined as ‘the most serious long-term threat to both humankind and the planet’.\(^{30}\) And in a recent ecological socialist account devoted to addressing climate change, Neale argues that capitalism possesses the technological capacity and the resources to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions, but lacks the motivation.\(^{31}\)

From this perspective, once capitalist relations of production are superseded, and capital accumulation ceases, use-values will be liberated from exchange value, allowing them to be used for socio-ecological ends. The approach rather crudely assumes productive forces are neutral: if capitalism produces

\(^{28}\) Smith, p. 65.

\(^{29}\) Smith, p. 153-4.


natural limits, then its means of production, and associated technologies, are central to ecological degradation. The forces of production, in terms of what they are geared to achieve, clearly are themselves shaped by the relations of production, and thus themselves erode ecologies.

In other models, socialist ecologies are not built on post-capitalist forces of production, but on new socio-ecological inter-relations. Central to this is the recognition that the production of nature has a different logic to it from the production of social categories, such as class. Ecological relations cannot be reduced to social relations. The problem is with the failure to accord autonomy to ecologies. As Harvey argues, Marxists and ecological socialists have ‘avoided a definition of any foundational view of nature altogether, or resorted to a rather too simplistic rhetoric about the “humanisation of nature” backed by a dialectical and historical materialism that somehow absorbed the problem’32.

Ecological-socialism must then address specific contradictions between the social organisation of production and the ecological conditions of production. Something of this emerges in Kovel’s formulation that with the passing of capitalist exchange value, ecosocialism ‘valorises forces of productive activity to the degree that these foster ecosystemic integrity…’ 33 To use O’Connor’s formulation, the second contradiction of capitalism has a different logic from its first contradiction: capital-nature contradictions are qualitatively distinct from the capital-labour contradictions, and require distinct responses.

The challenge is a qualitative one, of charting possibilities for freedom from domination, for both classes and nature, through what Harvey characterises as a dialectical ‘learning spiral’34. A preliminary conceptual frame, charted by

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32 Harvey, p. 194.
34 Harvey, p. 149.
Harvey, offers a series of themes for engagement between ecologists and socialists, and is suggestive of the central planks for an ecological socialist platform:

i. alienation: beyond the commodification of relations with nature

ii. hierarchy: generating social relations of transformation and social organisation for social change

iii. technology: producing technologies that enact ‘the metabolic relation to nature’

iv. difference: charting diversity with unity, mediating particular agendas and universal aspiration

v. space and time: addressing unevenness, nesting biospheres, engaging inter-generationality

These may suggest means of operationalising ecological socialism in an open-ended way that can, indeed, generate the required ‘learning spiral’.

**Conclusions**

In ‘The Enemy of Nature’ Kovel declares that with climate change ‘the moment for the global realization of ecosocialism has arrived’: just as in the early Twentieth Century humanity was faced with a choice between socialism and barbarism, so today we are confronted with the choice between ecosocialism and ecocatastrophé. Unlike ecological modernization, ecosocialism is capable of addressing the causes of ecological crisis; and unlike ecological sufficiency, it seeks to transform capitalism rather than to evade or contain it. As the parade of false solutions is overwhelmed by an unprecedented global ecological crisis, we may expect ecological socialism to move to centrestage. In anticipation of this, formulations of the

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35 Kovel, p. 258 and 262.
ecosocialist future and how we can get there, become centrally important.

Note

This is a very early conceptual outline for a book that I am co-authoring with Prof James Anderson of Queens University Belfast over the next six months. Comments very welcome, to: james.goodman@uts.edu.au

Bibliography


THE DEREGULATION OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN TAIWAN: NATIONALIZATION, COMMODIFICATION OR PEASANT-NEEDED DEVELOPMENT?

Hsiu-mei Chung

This research is aimed to explore two issues, (1) to evaluate the various agricultural policies that the government of Taiwan has initiated to accelerate the process of liberalization and deregulation since the entry of the nation into GATT in late 1980s and its accession to WTO in January 1, 2002; (2) to analyze the corresponding changes that has taken place in the rural areas, especially changes in the agricultural economy of the small farmers in Taiwan. In the past, state intervention in the land reform and modernization of agriculture has opened the door for the creation of a classed based society providing space for primitive type of accumulation. As a result, market oriented and industrial based agriculture has become the dominant forces for transforming the dynamics of agricultural economy. In this study, I would like to

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ponder on three issues; i) to locate the driving force behind the forces of neo-liberalism and the thinking of civil society with respect to the impact of neo-liberalism on rural economy; ii) to critically identify the movement of resistances by the small farmers against the project of rural agricultural development initiated by the state under the policies of neo-liberalism; and iii) to evaluate the limitations and shortcomings of the small farmers’ movement?

**Historic review: Functions of primitive accumulation and reflections on agricultural policies**

The agricultural development in Taiwan since the end of World War II was integrally linked to the expansion of global capitalistic forces aided by the “Rural Revival Committee” set up by the United State of America. The development goals of the “Rural Revival Committee” were to establish rural modernization through grass-roots organizations of farmers in order to encourage them to increase agricultural production, sales, credit, and irrigation. They also supported family based rural industry, nutrition and health care systems and educational programs. Since the 1960s, farmer associations became the locomotive of the rural development. The promotion of share cooperatives of the grass-roots farmer associations has all round-functions; as an economic variable it encouraged and supervised rural agricultural crops cultivation, promotion, production and sales and other economic activities, and in the social space it organized baby-sitting, health care and educational programs. In short, the farmer associations have become pivotal for the rural development and welfare systems. The 4-H Club system established by the “Agricultural Revival Committee” undertook the training of rural youths and encouraged rural youths to play a "hands-on" role in community.

The capitalist-style land reform policies implemented in Taiwan from 1949 to 1952 increased the individual farmers from about 30% prior to the agricultural reform to 55% in 1950 and 64% in 1960 (Yohon, 1992, 34). In the postwar turbulent
year of 1964, the total agricultural output index of Taiwan was only 17 (100 in 1981). However, the US aid during the ten years from 1951 to 1961 amounted to an average annual sum of US$100 million and a total actual amount of US$1.44 billion. The agricultural total output index of Taiwan was 32 in 1951 and 54 in 1961. US aid thus was an important factor for the survival of the Kuomintang (KMT) regime by offering economic stability.

The “Fertilize-Rice Bartering System” implemented in 1951 stabilized the rice price and output through different policies such as “Land Tax Levy”; “Purchase of Agricultural Products From Farmers When Collecting Payment in Kind”; “Production capital fund bartering for rice” and “Food Region System”. These policies paved the road for industrialization by amassing a surplus from agricultural production, but by making rice price below the production cost. Accumulation of resources for industrial growth was the primary objective of the agricultural reform projects. The main characteristic of the agricultural development at this stage was the rapid increase of agricultural production (Liu, 1993, 58). In the 1960s, industries with export-oriented production became the mainstay of development. This phase of development, it was assumed, was triggered by the growth of national capitalism with the assistance of multinational corporations (mainly from the US and Japan) as it was the time of the expansion of market by the capitalist nations. The release of the labor force from the rural areas of Taiwan perfectly augmented the growth of industrial capitalism.

Declining agriculture
The agricultural development since 1970’s was marked by two specific factors: i) rapid downturn; and ii) the fragmentation of agricultural production. The typical farmer in Taiwan at the time was small farmers with average farming land below one hectare. Since 1964, the agricultural population began to drop and the remaining farmers began to grow cash crops as the land was
marginalized while the agricultural products had to be exchanged through market. However, the small scale farming was not sustainable in the specialized cash-crop production and the small farmers converted themselves as laborers. Farmers employed as laborers in agricultural production expanded to 90% in 1980. (Liu, 1993, 1972~1976)

From 1972 to 1983, the income of farmers continued to reduce and as a result the “80,000 agricultural building army” (a radical organization of farmers) marched forth demanding the second phase of the agricultural land reform. The march expected to "rebuild the confidence of farmers" and "create a new look in rural areas”. However, compared to non-agricultural households, the income was still on the low side. In 1990, the Taiwan government proposed the zero growth agricultural programs, handing down the death sentence of Taiwan's agriculture. The motivations of the program were the following:

1. The development of the export-oriented agriculture. To create space for export oriented crops, production of food crops was considered as flawed and therefore must be discouraged. For example, promotion of shrimp and eel farming would result in the reduction of rice cultivation as the land for rice is converted for fish farms. Moreover, it damaged the natural environment. The pig-raising industry would cause river pollution while the values in exchange were relatively high. A policy of production reduction was introduced with respect to rice production.

2. The impact of trade liberalization on agriculture. The survival of the existing agriculture was threatened with the advent of internationalization of economy. Taiwan not only imported agricultural products from the United States, it would also have to compete with the cheaper agricultural products imported from Mainland China in the future (Liu, 1993, 2001).

In 1993, Council of Agriculture developed the “Enforcement Rules on Agricultural Land Usage Change”, and suggested that more than 250,000 hectares of land would be released across Taiwan for industrial use. The stipulated
assumptions for land conversion were: i) land subsidence area, ii) agricultural land of low productivity, iii) agricultural land of contaminated soil, and iv) rural areas of the urban planning. This policy, no doubt, summed up that the farmers would not enjoy the fruits of their blood and sweat in the past 40 years. Instead, the urban capitalistic class would make full use of the land to reap the fruits of the abnormal development of the economic miracle.

In short, Taiwan's agricultural modernization has a negative impact on rural population; created social division, deprived the health of farmers, massively polluted the environment and strengthened gender inequality. While the agricultural and rural areas were receding, offering a fuzzy identity to farmers as unwelcomed wanders in the city borders, urban centers have grown fast due to the concentration of industrial economy. The uneven development of Taiwan has its roots in this flawed agricultural policy. In the past Kuomintang (KMT) government was successful in involving itself in the rural areas through organizational mobilization as a means for establishing state control on people and economies. But this experiment of state control is found to be not feasible with the emphasis democratization and liberalization and as a result civil society started to step in from 1990s. In addition, due to the poor economy and land price fall, farmers will find it difficult to run the credit sector while the staffing constraints of the promotional personnel make the promotion of various educational programs in rural areas more difficult.

Reflections on the small farmers’ movement

In the late 1980s, several waves of small farmer demonstrations occurred within a short span of time. The nature of agricultural development discussed in the previous section was the main reason for the outbreak of the small farmer movement. It was also strengthened by:

i). The exploitation of primary producers by the middleman. Traditionally the agricultural products in Taiwan were
purchased in metric measure (kilogram) and sold in a specific Taiwan calculation known as “Jin” which offered a reasonable profit for the middlemen at about 40%. But apart from this profit in the conversion of tables, traders forced a price difference of 6-10 times the original at the place of consumption. Government’s refusal to intervene in the market of agricultural products, offered the middlemen the freedom to extract exorbitant profit leading to the disorder and imbalance of the prices.

ii). The loss of bargaining power: As the system of small farmers could not take part in the large-scale competition of the market and they had no initiative in the market while the Government had done absolutely nothing, the farmers lost their bargaining power. As a result, farmers’ willingness to produce became weaker.

3. Pressure of cooperate agricultural trade: the imports of bananas, turkey meat, apples, grapes, citrus, and other foods were unstoppable under U. S. pressure in 1987 (Chen, 1992). This lead to the shrinking space for Taiwanese farmers in the agricultural market

In 1987, the "1208" Action of fruit farmers mainly from Taichung and Tungshi went to the Executive Yuan to protest the import of agricultural products and opened a surging series of farmer movements from 1987 to 1988. The background of such movements could be traced back to the wave of criticism on the government by the intellectuals since 1970s. The intellectuals promoted few magazines; for example "Formosa" for discussion about the broad trend of the times; "University Journal" favored by intellectuals who sought reform of KMT; "China Tide" for promotion of Chinese National Socialism and Taiwan independence. They put on actively their dissatisfaction with the KMT regime and promote Taiwan’s self-determination, such as "Taiwan politics", "Formosa", and "New Wave" magazine.

Not until the outbreaks of the 1977 Jhungli Incident, 1978 Additional People’s Representative Election, and the 1979 Formosa Incident, did these elites talking about contemporary
politics face up the test of the real politics in Taiwan. Although the opposition movements were politically repressed by the military dictatorship led by General Wang Sheng, the people in Taiwan who had suffered the rule of KMT for a long time gradually stepped out through these incidents. Therefore, at this moment, the movements in opposition to the rule of KMT formed an alliance, no matter the differences in ideology regarding independence or unification with the Mainland China.

In addition to the democratic initiatives of the intellectuals, the grass-roots forces also began to rise. In 1986, because of pressure from the United States to allow the martial law to continue for up to 40 years in the name of democracy, the labor movements (for year-end bonuses, union independence movement), the movement of vulnerable groups (indigenous people, Hakka mother-tongue movement), and other burgeoning social movements created space for the growth of social movements in Taiwan. Leaders of the farmer movements also emerged in such a favorable political atmosphere.

Taiwan’s small farmers movement in 1988 were largely divided by the "5/20" incident. At the former stage, the "Farmers' Association" was the leading force, composed mainly of "China Tide" members of the "Formosa" magazine who were intellectuals and mountain (aboriginal) farmers. At this stage they had three major objectives: (1) food sovereignty; (2) transparency of food production and information of marketing; (3) a comprehensive reform of the Agriculture Council; and seven major proposals: (1) demand to the Government to clearly define the system of agricultural protection policy; (2) farmers’ comprehensive insurance; (3) production and marketing system reform including prohibition of middleman exploitation; (4) rapid measures to prevent the contamination of agricultural land by industrial waste water by setting up "Act of Agricultural Resource Pollution Prevention"; (5) to promote Production plan; (6) to raise the prices of agricultural products as well as the guaranteed prices; (7) to abolish the water project fees.
At the later stage "5/20" movement was led by the "Farmers' Rights Association", composed of members from the "New Wave". Because of the strong political overtones of the Movement, it provoked the repression by the KMT government, resulting in the arrest and bloodshed of 130 people. Brutal repression leads to the decline of the farmer movements.

The movement had a seven point charter: (1) comprehensive agricultural insurance; (2) reduce the burden of fertilizers on farmers, remove manure value-added tax, and the abolition of fertilizer marketing costs of the Farmers Council. (3) increase the quantity and price of rice; (4) abolition of method for the selection of the Director-General of the farmers council and empower the farmer representatives; (5) to set up the Ministry of Agriculture, the settlement of the agricultural question to overcome the power shortage of the Executive Council of Agriculture, (6) removal of the provincial government's poor agricultural policy; (7), opening up the free use of agricultural land, abolition of the Agricultural Development Act Section 30 and Land Registration Rules 82, which were unjust laws hindering the development of the rural areas.

The key members of the small farmers movement, namely Lin Feng-si and Dai Cheng-yao, were elected as Democratic Progressive Party (DDP) legislators of the Executive Yuan to promote the amendment of agricultural laws. So far, among the seven major proposals put forward by "Farmers' Association", only the comprehensive insurance coverage of farmers and abolition of the water irrigation fees have materialized. Among the proposals of the "Farmers' Rights Association" only the following received a favorable decision: the demands to increase the quantity of rice production and improve the market price of rice; to allow free use of agricultural land; and the abolition of the Agricultural Development Act Section 30 and Article Land Registration Rules 82. However, the policy of opening up the agricultural land use greatly influenced the deregulation and
commercialization of agricultural land, causing the rural development of Taiwan to be more and more dependent on urban needs.

In the 1980s, farmer’s movements in Taiwan were partially absorbed by the DDP-led opposition movement. Some leaders became the local opposition leaders and became a part of the cadre of opposition parties. The three rural issues at this period were "farmer dissatisfaction", "agricultural shrink", and "rural decline". By linking up with the political process, the farmers’ movement to an extent was able to empower small farmers to challenge the agricultural policies that were not conducive to farmers’ right to life. This was done through the interactions between small farmers and intellectuals while loosened the established solid relations of power in rural areas to create new conditions for rural development.

Unbinding and rebounding

The privatization trend in the 1990s to 2000 has substantively transformed the state-owned enterprises and state-subsidized enterprises such as the Agricultural Improvement Stations into privately owned enterprise. As a result, the farmers had to bear the burden of technical and seeds consultation fees as an additional cost. Later, when Taiwan’s economy was brought under the forces of global economy by its entry into the WTO, the plight of Taiwan’s farmers became more critical. In other words, the agricultural policy orientation in name of "globalization", "freedom " and" reform” pushed the small farmers who made great economic contribution in the past to the bottom of the abyss.

Since DDP came to power in 2000, a number of agricultural policies were introduced with the objective of lifting the restrictions on economy, but in reality such policy measures had the hidden intention to eradicate farmers’ associations. DDP regarded farmers’ associations in Taiwan as the headquarters of KMT. In particular, farmers’ associations were the grass-roots units to carry out the policies issued by the
Council of Agriculture of the Executive Yuan. Thus the political motivation of DDP to dismantle farmers’ associations was clearly understandable. But on another level, Chen Shui-Bian's second-stage financial reform, in the name of efficiency, encouraged to closed down cooperative banks, agricultural coop credit and small and medium banks which supported by small farmers. The policy was to allow monopolization of financial capital. To take agricultural credit for an example, on September 14, 2001 the Ministry of Finance ordered banks to take over 29 credit departments of Farmers’ Associations, and they took over another seven on July 26, 2002. On August 22 in the same year, it promulgated the order to “limit the business of the credit departments of the Agriculture and Fisheries Associations," expecting the death of the associations.

On September 5, 2002, the local faction members of KMT, such as the farmers, farmers’ associations, and the agricultural professionals formed the "Taiwan Agro-Fighters United" and launched on November 23 the "11/23" 150,000-farmers marched to show self-defense and to express the anxiety of farmers. "Taiwan Agro-Fighters United" had "the three demands" and "10 advocates": the three major demands were "save agriculture, fishing industries as well as farmers and fishermen” “farmers and fishermen need the farmer/fishermen associations to continue to provide services ", and "formulation of “Agricultural Finance Act” based on the sustainable operation of the credit departments of the farmer/fisherman associations.

"Ten advocates" were: 1) create agricultural development fund to the tune of NT$ 150 billion along with another fund for "Import agricultural product-related damage relief fund"; 2) in accordance with the law, to promote the implementation of retirement system for old age farmers; 3) to promote the exchange of urban and rural areas, to set up an agency of "National Exchange of Urban and Rural Areas and Rural Area Revitalization”; 4) through "Agricultural Finance Act", to set up the "Agricultural Bank of Taiwan”; 5) to amend the farmer association law to establish a unified authority, and
the Council of Agriculture would co-ordinate supervision and guidance of the farmer associations; 6) implement the equity system, and the farmer/fisherman associations would be established as farmers and fishermen Cooperation Organizations of multi-objective functions. To stop the implementation of the existing agricultural (and fishery) Department of Business Credit restrictions to relax business activities; 8) to allow the reestablishment of the 36 farmers/fishing credit departments under the farmer/fishermen associations; 9) to amend the "Financial Institution Merger Act", so that credit departments of poor management could be transferred to other farmer/fisherman associations instead of banks; 10) to ensure the implementation of the "Agricultural Policy White Paper" raised in the campaign of President Chen Shui-Bian; 11) to protect the life and income of farmers and fishermen.

Che Zhan (Jan Chao-Li), a poet belonging to the grassroots farmer association noted: "The march proved two points: first, it proved that Taiwan's small farmers are not entirely silent when facing the impact on Taiwan’s agriculture by internationalization and liberalization under the WTO framework. Second, it proved the historic role and function of the farmer/fisherman associations in Taiwan, their organizational integrity and the values of continuity" (January, 2003). However, limited by the perspective on reflecting upon WTO membership, “11/23” march turned into “a day of the market”. They did not delve into the root causes of their plight by relating their condition to the reality of the global capital plundering the Third World economies. The reform within the system on the one hand could be easily absorbed by the government, while on the other hand both KMT and DDP were the political agents of the comprador bourgeoisie class. Neither of them could stop the pressure of the dumping of agricultural products from the United States, and the problem of some farmer/fisherman associations being lost to corruption was not addressed.
Ironically, less than two years after "the official commitment" by the DDP government, the "Rice Bomber Incident" occurred. As Taiwan was forced to import from the United States hundreds of thousands of tons of rice since the WTO entry, it resulted in the price stagnation of Taiwan's rice. As a result farmers in Taiwan found themselves to be unable to strike a balance between cost of production and returns from market. In 2003, rice farmers in Hsingang protested and the situation was slightly changed to their favor. However, the rural areas were still in dire conditions. Fortunately, thanks to a young justice-oriented man, Yang Ru-Men, later nicked named as the Rice Bomber, the deep anger of the people was surfaced again.

Public upsurge of the anger was expressed in a petition signed by more than 30,000 people to declare “Solidarity with Yang Ru-Men". The petition states: “A simple and hard-working young man with meager income, he has been a long-term generous donor to those who are poor, helpless, orphans and victims of disasters. Coming from the rural area, from the lowest regions of Taiwan, he respects his land, the hard-earned crops, and refuses to see farmers end up with nothing after years of toiling on the land. The Government easily succumbs to the power of the foreign economic pressure groups to open doors for cross-border imports of agricultural products so that the local food crops are slashed in the cold market. As a result, he speaks for the voice of farmers and the land in his own way. This is Yang Ru-Men, the "Rice Bomber" who is currently being kept in prison.”

Yang Ru-Men, who defied the law, will not be tolerated by the state system of justice and is likely to pay a heavy price for what he has done. Unfortunately in Taiwan, the voices of the weak are unlikely to be heard. Yang Ru-men’s radical action, while it reveals the bitterness of farmers and exposes the agricultural predicament of Taiwan, calls for a radical evaluation of the relationship between the plight of farmers and the onslaught of the international trade and economic system. WTO decisions affect the future direction of the world, and the
Commodification of Peasants in Taiwan

influence will infiltrate the bone marrow of each individual and rule our daily lives bit by bit.

The Yang Ru-Men incident should not be seen exclusively as a criminal case and the judiciary should evaluate and appropriately relieve the criminal responsibility of the prisoner of conscience. Secondly, the ruling authorities should attach more importance to the problems revealed by the Rice Bomber and take more active policies to save Taiwan's agriculture. Third, ruling authorities must create a public consciousness to accept the reality that agricultural protection is related to food security, which is also linked up with national defense security, ecological security, social security, and cultural security. As the old saying goes, “national subjugation comes after the death of agriculture.” Agriculture should not be sacrificed in the WTO mechanism of international trade and should not be at the expense of foreign agricultural products sweeping across Taiwan. In the negotiations, Taiwan's "Food Sovereignty "should be reasonably defended, and the livelihood of our farmers cannot be reduced to the offerings of international powers, let alone the stakes of the brutal market or diplomatic comprador (Lin, 2004).

In 2006, Yang Ru-Men was released short of sentence according to Article 59 of the Criminal Code, "being worthy of pity based on the situation," and received a Presidential amnesty. At present, Yang Ru-Men is actively learning agriculture and promoting the idea of the survival of agriculture in various parts of Taiwan.

After the relaxation of agricultural policies under the DPP government, the market-orientation of land and agriculture came to limelight. These policies have four major impacts: a) promoting agricultural enterprises and guiding investment in agriculture which eventually eliminated the small farmers. Agricultural economy was transferred as a capitalist venture under agro-industrial capitalist resulting in massive de-peasantization. b) According to the principles of rural area business management, talent training program to enhance
farmers' capabilities in leisure agriculture management in approaches such as "agriculture-combined tourism" and "agriculture-combined education," "agriculture-combined care" to develop new agricultural land-use service industries has paved the way for the entry of a new type of agricultural and agricultural real-estate businesspeople. These policies deprived the autonomy of peasant based agricultural economy.

**The battle for the future of farming:**

The experience gained from years of struggle by small farmers’ associations around the world such as Via Campesina, Confédération Paysanne, and CPE, suggest that “agriculture-based” rural development need to relay upon “de-commercialism”, “cooperation”, “food sovereignty” and “biodiversity”.

“The Path of Farmers” is an international farmer alliance with members in 56 countries across the Latin-America, Africa, Asia, and Europe. Its principles are: 1) to defend food sovereignty, oppose the monopoly style and pure market-oriented sales and marketing of WTO and other international agro-food enterprises; 2) to adhere to biodiversity against GMOs; 3) promote agriculture of the farmers instead of the agriculture of the businessmen; 4) respect the rights of the farmer groups and rural organizations; 5) equal rights to land, water, seed and other production tools; 6) to recognize the special role of women in the agricultural production process and knowledge inheritance. Gender equality should be promoted actively in both individual groups and international organizations.

Founded in 1987, Confédération paysanne (Conf) was merged from two farmer trade unions called CNSTP and FNSP. Having branches at every province of France and its overseas territories, Conf is also an important member of the international farmer organization named Via Campesina. Conf promotes the “agriculture of the farmers” and is against the control of international agricultural groups over agriculture. It also argues
that agricultural activities must be organically linked with environmental preservation. It demands to safeguard the employment of farmers and improve working conditions as well as emphasizing on the quality of the agricultural products.

The main ideas of the “European Farmer Alliance” are: 1) recognize the economic value of the work of farmers and it must be the main source of income for them; 2) adhere to sustainable development of production, respect environment, and attach importance to the quality and safety of the agricultural products; 3) self-control of the production process; 4) to ensure subsidies of the public sector to be equally allocated to different production systems and areas; 5) build close relationships with farmers in Asia, Latin America, Africa, and middle Europe; 6) reject any dumping activities in international trade (Lin, 2008).

Taiwan’s rural development in the past was shaped by lessons taught by Japan and the U. S. The challenge now is to take the current development of agriculture-related topics of the Third World into serious consideration. For example, the cardinal issue of food crisis has turned as a good business opportunity for the rich multinational corporations while it is a life and death issue for the poor around the world. According to the statistics provided by United Nations, the population bordering on starvation to death, suffering from malnutrition, and having unstable access to food amounts to 3 billion, that is, half of all the people on earth. The poor are fighting the last battle for the right to survive.

On the contrary, a minority of the global population benefits from the global market mechanism and they are mainly distributed in North America, Europe, Japan and a few rich Third World cities. To keep the living styles of these rich countries or groups, the crisis of the poor should be maintained. The statement by the former U. S. president Bush affirmed this sentiment: “the life of American people cannot be compromised”. The American rich not only stick to their
spending customs and refuse to compromise, but other rich nations also will not compromise. They devise new policy measures and encourage new discourses to ensure the right of the rich to accumulate at the expense of the poor. The Doha Round of WTO is an example to this respect. Doha Round talks were aimed at derailing the development of agriculture in poor nations and to allow the control of agricultural land and market around the world by a few multinational agro-business corporations hailing from the rich nations. The talks almost ground to a halt due to the opposition and protest of various civil organizations and anti-globalization movements as well as the joint boycott of the Southern developing nations. Being dissatisfied by their failure, MNC’s are requested WTO general secretary Pascal Lamy to summon the trade ministers of the major developed member states of WTO to discuss how to restart the Doha Round to relieve the agricultural product subsidy polices of the rich nations (The Guardian in July 2\textsuperscript{nd}, 2008). NGOs which are fighting against the logic of market supremacy of WTO warned that the restart of Doha rounds dominated by the rich nations and their multinational agriculture enterprises could only lead to the escalation of food prices and to aggravate food crisis, depriving the developing countries of their capability of maintaining self-sustainability. As a consequence their reliance on major trading countries to feed their own people will increase.

It is even worse for the people of poor nations as the food crisis breaks out concurrently with the oil crisis. This is because of the dependence brought by green revolution on chemicals and machinery based on petrochemical fuels. Thus the oil crisis certainly increases the burden of production costs on the farmers. How do we respond to the world food crisis? The third world nations began to rethink the problem of consumption and distribution to find a means to resolve the crisis. For example, the Venezuelan government declared that food is part of the fundamental human rights and set up volunteers to distribute food to the poor, the children, and to the
elderly. They also established cheap stores to satisfy the basic needs of the people. About a quarter of the poor people in Brazil claim the household funds from the government to purchase basic necessities. Cuba relentlessly promotes the urban farms that make use of the waste land, empty land, and odd land in the outskirts for organic agriculture to provide half of the vegetables and fruits needed for the country. Therefore, the food crisis may have a way out and it only depends on how one challenges the market mechanism and power game dominated by the rich countries.

4. Conclusion:

According to Samir Amin, in his book *The Vibrant Social Movements in the Single-polar World*, a multiple-polar world is a framework that is appropriate for all nations and communities. The following four conditions are requested to make it true:

(1) Europe must embark on another path to the post-capitalist world, and it shall draw the line expressed by the past and present imperialism.

(2) In China, the market-oriented socialist road shall overcome the strong tendency to build national capitalist system, which expels the majority of the people like workers and farmers and thus cannot be truly stable.

(3) The peoples and governments of the Southern nations shall re-establish a common front. Only the realization of such a common front will ensure the people to have necessary space for activities. And they will be empowered to change the nature of the regimes by replacing the ruling comprador groups by national, democratic people’s groups.

(4) The reorganization of internal and international legal systems that will respect sovereignty as well as individual and collective political and social rights of various social movement and civil groups. (Amin, 2008).

The comprador regime of Taiwan under the control of the United States has for the past 50 years introduced a series of
deregulation and liberalization policies in agriculture which lead to the elimination of the small farmers. The sole objective of these policies was to support the emergence of monopoly agricultural enterprises. Therefore, for the survival of small farmers in Taiwan it is an imperative to forge an alliance with small farmers in the third world nations, including China. It should also work towards a new development strategy for the rural development of Taiwan; not informed by the capitalist value of selfishness and profit, but by the morals of “social bond”, “farmer self-rule”, “ecological preservation”, “gender equality”, “biodiversity”, “cooperation” and “food sovereignty”.

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DEPEASANTISATION IN INDIA: A CASE STUDY ABOUT THE CAUSES AND IMPACTS IN TWO VILLAGES IN ANDHRA PRADESH

John M. Itty

In 1950-51, production of food grains in India was 50.82 million tonnes. As a result of the introduction of Green Revolution (GR) technology in 1966, it went up to 108.42 million tonnes in 1970-71; and it steadily increased to 212.03 in 2001-2002. Although this is a remarkable achievement, it was beset by two deficiencies- one; increase in the production of crops was limited to wheat, rice and maize alone, and two; the productivity revolution was confined only to cereal farmers in the irrigated areas (Nampoothiri.2007). Despite these limitations, farmers and farming sector enjoyed the benefits of GR till the end of 1980s. Since then production and productivity stagnated. The Total Factor Productivity (TFP) in agriculture has been declining between 1980s and 1990s. In the Indo-Gangetic plains, the seat

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Depeasantization in India

of GR, `TFP growth was found 2 per cent a year between 1980 and 1990, and negative growth in many years since then. (Tuteja. 2007). This was due to declining yields, unviable farming, limited scope for extending cultivated area, land degradation and depletion of soil fertility, water shortage for irrigation due to fall in ground water table and disparities in yield rates across crops and regions (Tuteja. 2007). The problems of the farmers due to these reasons got aggravated since 1990 as a result of the introduction of New Economic Policy (NEP). The new policy by integrating agriculture to global market promised opportunities for improving profit from farming. Farmers responded to this promise of global market by changing the cropping pattern in favour of cash crops. This is evident from decline in the area under food crops from 123.6 million hectares in 1996-97 to 123.3 million hectares in 2003-04. But, the farmers who converted their land to cash crops suffered lose mainly due to two reasons- one; steep rise in the cost of agricultural inputs, and two; decline in the price of cash crops due to liberal import of agricultural crops and subsidy for farmers in the US. This led to agrarian distress in India during the post reform period. Suicide of 1,82,936 farmers between 1997 and 2007 shows the magnitude of the distress the farmers faced due to the situations referred to above. The Situation Assessment Survey of the National sample Survey Organisation (Govt. of India 2005) based on its survey covering 51,770 households spread over 6,638 villages in 2005 confirms the gravity of the situation by revealing that 48% of the farmers are in debt and that 40% are ready to give up farming provided they could secure some other job.

Change in the cropping pattern referred to above is found more sharp in Andhra Pradesh (AP), where area under food grains declined from 73,09,000 hectares in 1996-97 to 68,07,000 hectares in 2003-04; and that under cotton increased

2 Economic Intelligence Service –Agriculture, CMIE, Mumbai. March 2006
from 10,15,000 hectares in 1996-97 to 11,78,000 hectares in 2004-05\(^4\). The study by Mitra et al (2007) found that suicide rates are high only in states where cotton is an important crop and that in 2004-05, the highest suicide rate occurred in Andhra Pradesh which has around 8% of its areas under cotton. According to Assadi (2006) farmers’ suicide began in Andhra Pradesh. Among 28 states in India, Maharashtra, AP, Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh accounts for 64% of farmers’ suicide in the country\(^5\). According to the Census figures of 2001, whereas 12.9 farmers per 100000 committed suicide in the country as a whole, the rate in AP is 19.2 per 100000; and during the period between 1997 and 2005, a total of 16,770 farmers in A P committed suicide\(^6\). During this period, in terms of the percentage increase of suicide, AP is at the top of the list above all other states - 127%\(^7\). These figures show the acuteness of the distress in agrarian sector in that state. Warangal is one of the districts in AP where suicide of farmers has been high. Therefore, we have taken two Panchayats – Duggondi and Thimmapeta in Warangal district for the field study, with the following objectives:

1. Examine the causes behind agrarian distress in the sample Panchayats, and.
2. Evaluate its Economic political and social impacts

**I. Profile of the Sample Panchayats and the rationale for selecting the samples**

Duggondi and Thimmapeta are two Grama Panchayats (GPs) in Duggondi Mandal in Warangal district. Profile of the GPs is given in Table No.1.

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\(^4\) Economic Intelligence Service .op.cited


\(^6\) ibid

\(^7\) ibid
Table 1
Profile of the Sample GP’s

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the GP’s</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>No.of Households</th>
<th>SC Households</th>
<th>ST Households</th>
<th>Main Cultivators</th>
<th>Marginal Agri. workers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Duggondi</td>
<td>2686</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thimmapets</td>
<td>3847</td>
<td>1008</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>519</td>
<td>699</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Records of the GPs.

Most of the Panchayats in Warangal district are known for high rate of farmers’ suicide due to distress in agricultural sector. Availability of contact persons and investigators was the main criterion for selecting the samples for our investigation. While selecting the samples we have ascertained the availability of a reasonable number of Schedule Caste [SC] and Scheduled Tribes [ST] households also. There are 21% and 16% of SC and ST households respectively in the sample GPs.

II. Methodology of the Study
The study is based mainly on primary data collected from the sample GPs. The study team visited the sample GPs in April 2008 to have an overview of the situation there and to prepare the questionnaire accordingly. After preparing the questionnaire it was put for pre-test with the help of a volunteers from the region who helped in the interviews with language translation. After the pre-test we have improved the questionnaire and collected the data in June 2008 with the help of the investigators. Our investigators collected information with

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8 SC and ST are legal terms used to denote Dalits and the indigenous communities respectively
the help of the questionnaire from 10 per cent of the households; and the study team moved around to supervise the work of the investigators.

Along with this, the study team visited at random 21 households, including those of 7 farmers who committed suicide with an open ended interview schedule to collect qualitative data. The report of this study is based on both the quantitative and qualitative data we have collected from the field.

**III. Profile of the Sample Population**

Break-up of different socio-economic groups in the sample households is given in Table No.2.

*Table 2*

Break-up of the Socio-economic Groups in the Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name Of The GP</th>
<th>Households</th>
<th>Households Interviewed</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>SC Households</th>
<th>SC Households Interviewed</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Duggondi</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thimmapeta</td>
<td>1008</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1658</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>356</td>
<td>36</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of The GP</th>
<th>No. ST Households</th>
<th>ST Households Interviewed</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Duggondi</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thimmapeta</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are only 3 Brahmin and 5 Vaisya families in these GPs. The occupation of Brahmin is priest- hood and that of Vaisya is money- lending and trade. There are only 4 Christian
and 2 Muslim families in these Panchayats. The number of SC and ST households is given in the Table. All others belong to different backward classes. Profile of the sample population is given in Table No.3.

Table 3
Profile of the Sample Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>No. of People</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total population in the sample household</td>
<td>761</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People in 20 to 60 age group</td>
<td>496</td>
<td>65.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 10 holders</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>11.7*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plus Two and above</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>44.1*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full time farmers</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>41.1*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Percentage of 496

The Table shows that 204 men (41.1% of the people in the 20 to 60 age group in the sample families) are full-time farmers. Others are full-time labourers, part-time labourers, traders, artisans etc. There are only 15 people having government job and 11 with industrial employment. It is significant that 219 persons (44.1% of the people in the 20 to 60 age group) have education up to and above plus two levels. Therefore, the farmers in this area cannot be included in the traditionally branded ‘illiterate, ignorant and unscientific Indian farmers’. The quality of human resources in these villages is not any impediment for improvement of agriculture.

IV. Pattern of Land Ownership and Lease farming

The pattern of land ownership in the sample villages is given in Table No.4 the landless and those who own less than one acre consisting of 33.6% of the farming community are very poor. The households with less than 2 acres of land that
constitute 62.8% belong to the category of small and marginal farmers. Only 25.2% of the households own more than 2 acres of land. Of this, only 6.9 percent who own above 4 acres can be considered as middle level farmers.

**Table 4**

Pattern of Land Ownership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of land</th>
<th>No. of household</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1 acre</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 to 2 acres</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>41.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 to 3 acres</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 to 4 acres</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 to 5 acres</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above 5 acres</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total response</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This pattern of land ownership with 12.2% landless and 62.8% small and marginal farmers reveals the fact that 75% of the households in the sample villages are highly vulnerable. Only the families with land holding above 4 acres of land were found relatively satisfied with farming. Small farmers who constitute the majority after working hard are adding on to their debt by undertaking farming every year. In the absence of alternative occupation they continue in the farming sector. The depressing situation in the life of the people was very much visible during our visit to the villages and the talks we had with the sample households.
Because of the distress in the agrarian sector farmers do not venture for lease farming.

Our enquiry revealed that only 9 households out of a total of 165 interviewed cultivate in leased-in land. The reason for this insignificant number of leased-in farmers is lack of confidence in the profitability of farming.

V. Causes Behind the Agrarian Distress


1. Cost, Availability and Quality of Inputs

Water

It was found that 97 farmers out of 165 households interviewed, (58.7%) draw water from their own wells for irrigation; and 30 farmers (18%) depend on public tanks and canals. Only 5 farmers (0.3%) depend on rain. To the question ‘do you get sufficient water for crops?’ 115 farmers (69.6%) answered ‘no’, and only 43 (26%) answered ‘yes’. The reason for insufficient supply of water according to 100 farmers (86.9%) is depletion of the sources of water, and as per the opinion of 15 (13%) is lack of funds to develop water sources. 103 farmers (62%) reported that they purchase water to augment supply, and 81 (78.6%) of them said that the price of water they purchase is very high. Another 18 (17%) revealed that apart from high cost they do not get water at the required time. These findings show that high cost and inadequate supply of water are major impediments to farming in the sample GPs. The realization of 86.9% of the farmers that depletion of the sources
of water is the reason for inadequate supply of water shows that source of water is largely a macro problem which cannot be solved with more investments for more wells and deepening/widening of wells, and installing more water pumps. This situation shows that development of seeds that grow with less water is the real answer for the development of agriculture. But, unfortunately thinking on these lines has not yet started seriously.

**Seeds**

93.9% of the respondents revealed that they had abandoned the practice of preparing seeds by themselves. As per reports, 75% of them purchase hybrid seeds and 24.5% Genetically Modified (GM) seeds. All the cotton farmers interviewed reported that they cultivate Bt-cotton (GM seeds). It was reported that while 90.3% of farmers purchase seeds from commercial suppliers; only 5.5% purchase the same from the co-operatives. As a result of the virtual absence of government department and cooperatives as a source of supply of seeds, commercial suppliers enjoy monopoly power in its sale. The farmers complained that in order to raise the price of seeds the suppliers create artificial scarcity in the sowing season. 43% and 49% of the farmers interviewed complained respectively that they face scarcity in the supply of seeds and non-availability of seeds in time. Very high price of seeds is the consequence of this situation.

We gathered the opinion of farmers on their perception about the superior profitability of hybrid and GM seeds. While 39.4% reported that hybrid seeds offer more than 50% increase in profit, 10% held that it helps to reap only around 10% increase in profit. In the case of Bt-cotton, while 21.2% reported more than 50% increase in profit, 31.5% held that it provides only around 10% increase in profit. 4.4% of cotton farmers who cultivate Bt-cotton could not make a clear assessment about its superior profitability. Prevalence of adulterated seeds appears to be the reason for different rate of yield. The farmers expressed
their suspicion about the genuineness of the seeds they purchase from the traders. The study by Sahai et al (2004) reported the prevalence of illegal variants of Bt-cotton. Paddy farmers who use hybrid seeds and cotton farmers who use Bt-cotton seeds, revealed in the interview that while the per acre yield from these seeds are higher, profitability is not high due to the higher cost of all the inputs.

**Fertilizers and pesticides**

While 15.4% farmers reported that they use organic manure, 46.4% said that they use organic manure and chemical fertilizers equally. On enquiry it was found that farmers use organic manure to raise paddy for self consumption and apply chemical fertilizers for cotton and other crops. Although 87.9% of the sample households believe that organic manure is good, more than half of the requirements are met with the use of chemical fertilizers. As per reports, decline in the number of farm animals, disappearance of common pastures and the practice of growing hedge plants/green grass, are the reasons that drive the farmers to more dependence on chemical fertilizers. Further, hybrid and GM seeds need heavy dose of chemical fertilizers. Farmers as per report use large amount of chemical pesticides.

**Modern Implements**

Dependence on modern agricultural implements is another factor that raises the cost of cultivation. Use of farm animals for milk, manure and energy for farming operations was a salient feature of peasant communities in the past. Our enquiry brought to light sharp decline in the number of farm animals in these villages. It was found that only 40% of the farmers keep some farm animals. Details about this are given in Table No.5.

Figures in the Table reveal two aspects of the situation. There are only 8 cows, 10 she buffaloes and 66 goats for the 165 sample families. This shows that the level of milk consumption in these villages is very low. Further, the sample households
keep only 96 draught animals. 80.2% of the families reported that compared to 10 years ago, they keep less farm animals.

**Table 5**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of animals</th>
<th>No. of households keeping animals</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Total no. of animals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ox</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cow</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buffaloes</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She buffaloes</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goats</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>66</td>
<td></td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Information about change in the use of draught animals as a source of energy for farming operations is given in Table No.6. The table reveals sharp decline in the use of draught animals for ploughing, transporting of crops and lifting of water. As a result, organic relations in farming – animals using farm wastes as feeds; and animals in turn providing manure and energy for farming operations – that existed in the past disappears. Further, these drive farmers towards growing dependence on the market for fertilizers, energy and energy-driven machines. Farmers either buy or hire tractors, power tillers, sprayers and pick up vans. This is another evidence of penetration of market forces in the farming villages. Apart from high cost for buying or hiring these machines, those who hire do
not get the machines in the required time. All these affect net returns from farming adversely.

*Table 6*
Change in the Use of Draught Animals for Different Operations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opinion about change in the use of animals</th>
<th>No. of households revealed opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ox/Buffalo driven plough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declined to half</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declined to 1/4th</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Almost extinct</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cannot assess</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**2. Change in cropping pattern**

The trend of converting land from paddy to cotton was found strong in these villages. This trend is given in Table No.7. Between 2001 and 2006, in AP, while the area under food crops increased only by 1.9% that under non-food crops went up by 10.7% (Govt.of A.P.2007). It is the hope about higher earning from cash crops under the neoliberal regime that the farmers change cropping pattern. But, price of cash crops showed violent fluctuation during the post-reform period. This is the reason why the rate of suicide is very high in the cotton growing belts. In district like East Godavari, Kadappa, and Kurnool, where paddy cultivation is predominant, suicide of farmers is conspicuous by
its absence. Change in cropping pattern is found helping the buyers of cash crops at the expense of the farmers.

Table 7
No. of Farmers Cultivating Cotton and the Acreage – 1990 to 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No of farmers</th>
<th>acre</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Dependence on the Market for Inputs
Growing dependence of farmers on hybrid and GM seeds, chemical fertilizers, pesticides, machines and fossil energy force them to rely on the market for inputs. As a result of the sharp decline in the number of farm animals, farmers purchase even organic fertilizers from the dairy and poultry farms. Number of sample households which depend on traders for inputs is given in table No.8.

Table 8
Dependency on Market for Seed and fertilizer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Input</th>
<th>No. of sample households purchase from traders</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seeds</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>93.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fertilizers</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>88.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pesticides</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>93.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Heavy dependence of farmers in the inputs market started with the introduction of GR technology from the end of 1960s. The price of these inputs increased steeply as a result of the impact of neoliberal policies, along with reduction or withdrawal of subsidy for agricultural inputs. In the two sample villages we found brisk sale of these inputs. In Duggondi where there are only 650 households, two such shops are operating. While being in Warangal city, the district head quarters, there are around 30 shops that sell seeds, fertilizers and pesticides on both sides of a busy street with colourful display of advertisements. Some years ago not even one such shop was found in such busy city streets. We visited one of the two shops in Duggondi. When we requested the owner of the shop to allow us some time for interview, he was very hesitant and tried to avoid us by saying that he has ‘no time’. But, when we readily agreed to wait for his convenience he allowed just five minutes. He avoided answering our questions and repeatedly said that now there is no problem for the farmers. While talking to him, a feeling of suspicion about us was very much visible on his face. This corroborated the general talk that the traders of agricultural inputs work like Shylocks in the rural villages by creating artificial scarcity for agricultural inputs and raising their prices.

Cost of inputs rises steeply due to two reasons – dependence on GR technology and growing monopoly power of input suppliers. Although dependence on marketed inputs started before the introduction of neoliberal policy, their cost has increased steadily during the post reform period. This is because, suppliers of seeds acquired monopoly power during the post reform period. Once the farmers lost their control over seeds completely, they have become a prey in the hands of seed suppliers who create artificial scarcity during the sowing season to manipulate price to their advantage.

4. Unprecedented rise in the cost of living

Along with the rising cost of farming, farmers as consumers also suffer from the new market forces. Cost of
subsistence of farmers has two components – cost of cultivation and cost of the maintenance of the farmers and their family. Cost of living, especially, cost of education and health care has increased steeply as a direct result of neoliberal policies. The new policy of marketization of education and health care has resulted in sky rocketing of the cost of these services. Due to the new policy of withdrawal of the state from health and education, quality of these services in the government sector deteriorated and people have lost faith in it. We received report about the new trend of parents sending their children in a new breed of un-aided private Telegue medium schools that sprang up in the villages. In these schools, as per report, tuition fee per child per year is around Rs.2000. Due to loss of faith in the quality of government schools, even small farmers and agricultural labourers reported that they send their children to the private schools, although it is unaffordable to them. Some parents anxious of ensuring decent job for their children through better education send their children in private English medium convent schools in the near by towns. We met Mr. Veeranna, an S.T. farmer with only 2 acres of land who send his two children in such a school, paying Rs.20000 per student per year for tuition and boarding. Along with working in his own farm he and his wife take up wage labour to earn money for children’s schooling. Due to reliance on private health care system, cost of health care also rises. After eliciting specific information referred to above, we asked the respondents to list their perception about the problems of the farmers in the order of importance. The response to this question is presented in Table No.9.

The Table reveals high cost of consumer goods, education, marriage and health care. Rise in the cost of education and health care is already referred to. The study by Sarma (2004) found that in Andhra Pradesh, I T education has hiked up the quantum of dowry, irrespective of whether the boy is gainfully employed or not. Borrowing for the marriage of
daughters is found one of the main reasons for the indebtedness in the sample villagers.

A more revealing picture about expenses for marriage, medical care and education as the cause for sale of land is given in Table No.11. Only one respondent reported that the temptation to adopt modern life style is the most important problem they face. Eight respondents cited ‘other reasons’ as the most important problem.

**Table 9**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Order of importance of the problem</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate revenue for farming</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High price of consumer goods</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of education</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage expenses</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical expenses</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern life style</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threat to farm land</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other reasons</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Addiction to liquor is ‘the other reason’ they mentioned. In the two villages we found brisk sale of ‘foreign liquor’. The villagers were addicted to liquor even during the pre-neoliberal period. But then it was not very expensive, as they were drinking home made or locally made liquor. But now, liquors with foreign brand names have become popular and reached their door steps. It causes a drain in their income. This is another impact of neoliberal policy. Some farmers sarcastically commented that these days ‘we have liquor shops and pesticide shops in all the villages’ inadequate revenue on the one side, and rising cost of living on the other push the farmers towards growing indebtedness.

All these findings show that as a result of the NEP, there is steep rise in the cost of cultivation and cost of living of the farmers in the sample villages. This corroborates the findings of Mitra et al (2007) that, during the period 2000-01 to 2002-03 cost of cultivation in Andhra Pradesh increased by 34.4%. The projected increase over 2000-01 to 2005-06 as per the calculation of this study is 109%.

5. Unfavourable price of crops

Returns from farming depend on the difference between the price of the crops and the price of inputs. We have already found the situation of high cost of inputs. All the farmers complained that price of crops either stagnate or do not increase in tune with increase in the cost of inputs. Due to the impact of neoliberal economic policy, price of cash crops turned against the interests of Indian farmers. Since 1970, import of cotton has been canalized through the Cotton Corporation of India. However, with the opening up of the economy, export and import of cotton is placed under Open General License (OGL). Since 2002, as a result of expansion of Bt-cotton, output in India has increased. But, the expected benefits from this to the farmers were off set by the surge in the import of cotton under OGL. Import of raw cotton into India increased from 0.787 million bales in 1998-99 to 2.526 million bales in 2001-02.
Cotton Farm Subsidy Programme of the US is another factor that depressed the price of cotton in the global market. The US pays annual subsidy of $3 billion for its cotton farmers plus an export subsidy of around $300 million. As a result, US farmers sold cotton at the rate of $1.18 per kg while the cost of production was $1.70 per kg\(^9\). Due to the impact of these two factors global market forces worked against the interests of Indian farmers. According to the calculation of Mitra et al (2007) gross real revenue of cotton farmers per head in AP fell by 4.7% during the period 2001-03. Poor staying capacity of the farmers and absence of any institutional arrangement for marketing the crops are the other factors that worked against the interests of the farmers. All the respondents reported that they sell crops immediately after the harvest. As per report, this year at the time of harvest, the price of cotton was between Rs.1600 to Rs.1800 per quintal and after few months it went up to Rs.3000. Farmers are not able to wait till such time due to lack of staying capacity and storage facilities. 83% reported that they sell the crops in the open market and 10% resort to pre-harvest sale to the creditors. Co-operatives are virtually absent in arranging sale of crops to the advantage of farmers. Farmers are aware of the fact that during the last one decade market forces operated against them – both when they buy inputs and when they sell crops. Mitra et al (2007) concludes that the loss in the competitiveness of the Indian cotton farmer after the opening up of India’s agricultural economy in the mid-1990s was a major reason for the increasing incidence of farmers’ suicides.

VII. Economic Impacts

Suicide of farmers

As per reports, around 60 farmers committed suicide in the sample villages due to agrarian distress. This constitutes 3.6% of the heads of the households in the two villages. A brief description of the families left behind by a few of those who

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\(^9\) Cariappa Vivek, Cariappa Juli (2004) ‘Crisis of Indian Cotton’ EPW October 23
ended their life is given in Table No.10. The table shows that the suicide of husbands made their wives widows at the age of 24 to 30. Re-marriage of widows is not allowed in these villages. Our interview with all these women brought the shocking information that all of them are repaying the debts by working as bonded labour in the field of their creditors. It was reported that Vishnu, the son of Ravi who committed suicide in 1998 who is now 18 years old, has been working as a bonded labour for his creditor for the last 5 years. He is paid neither any cash nor any food. Rs. 5000 is deducted from the debt of his father every year for his labour.

Table 10
Profile of the Families Affected by Suicide

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of person committed suicide</th>
<th>Year of suicide</th>
<th>Age at the time</th>
<th>Age of wife at the time</th>
<th>Family debt Rs.</th>
<th>Land ownership acre</th>
<th>No.of children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ravi</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vijaya Kumar</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nanakumar</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>70,000</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kapuswamy</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>200,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elisha</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bikshapathy</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>250,000</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nallabeli Ravi</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>150,000</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some of the widows were forced to pay back part of the debt by selling their land. From the conversation with the people, we could feel that at least 10 times the number of people who
ended their life were in the brink of suicide. 82% of the sample households revealed that they are debtors. 121 households reported that they are members of Neighbour Hood Groups (NHGs), and among them 108 revealed that they avail loan from NHGs.

Land alienation

The extent of land alienation is the index of agrarian distress. Therefore, we gathered information about change in the possession of land by farmers compared to that in 1985. During the last 23 years, 51 households (30.9%) suffered loss in the area of land under their ownership. 29 households (17.6%) enjoyed gain through this process. The percentage of families that lost land is substantial—near one third of the sample. Those who lost land during this period cut across all caste groups—Backward castes 33, SC 7, ST 7 and others 4. A comparison between the number of families who gained and suffered loss shows a strong trend towards concentration of land in these villages. Rawal (2008) found that inequality in ownership of land worsened between 1992 and 2003-04. As a result of land alienation the category of cultivators in rural villages decline sharply. Roy (2005) found that in AP, the number of cultivators declined from 32.74% in 1981 to 22.7% in 2001. We enquired the reasons for the sale of land. The responses of the households are given in Table No.11.

In order to continue in farming, farmers should get returns from that occupation sufficient to meet the minimum requirements of their families. Expenses for marriage of daughters, medical care and education of children have been increasing at an unprecedented rate since 1990s. This coupled with loss in farming pull them into perpetual indebtedness with the consequent land alienation and suicide.
Table 11
Reasons for the sale of land

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason for the sale of land</th>
<th>No.of families sold land</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marriage of daughters</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>45.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical expenses</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss in farming</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education of Children</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real Estate interest</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Growing unemployment

It was found that members from 79 families (47.9% of the sample) take up wage labour. Of these, 41 families supply 2 members each in the labour market. While 13 of them get employment only for 25 to 50 days, 20 get job from 50 to 100 days per year. Only 44 reported that they get employment for more than 100 days per year. The trend towards intake of more children and women for farming operations also was reported. This is due to change in the cropping pattern in favour of cotton. Whereas children cannot be used for harvesting of paddy, children alone are employed for harvesting of cotton. This is to take advantage of low wage for children and women. Daily wage for children and women as per the report during off season is Rs. 30 and 50 respectively and Rs. 50 and 80 during busy season. Increasing unemployment of adult male and growing exploitation of children and women are the results of agrarian distress in these villages. Adult males, redundant from other occupations, as per report, take up making and selling of illicit liquor, which adds the economic and social distress in the community.
VII. Political Impacts

Before the introduction of neoliberal policies, although farmers and the farming community had economic problems, they were politically powerful. Independent and politically affiliated farmers’ organizations were powerful enough for raising their demands and influencing the voting pattern in the state and national elections. Agricultural labour unions also had bargaining power in the past. It is the strength of these movements that imparted a sense of hope and respectability to the members of the farming community. It is this situation that provided the hope for the farming community to continue in their occupation in the past. However, as a result of the impact of neoliberal policy, the agrarian community – both farmers and agricultural workers became weak economically and politically. Gupta (1998) and Gill (2008) found decline in the power of farmers’ organizations in India during the post-reform period. In fact it is the weakness of political power of farmers and agricultural workers that contributes to ‘depeasantisation’ – the phenomenon of peasant community getting economically, politically and socially disempowered, leading to their disappearance from the villages.

We collected information about the political impacts of neoliberal policies on the farming community and verified it with the findings of Gupta (1998) and Gill (2008). The political impacts in the villages appear to be dialectical. While the villagers maintain high level of association with political parties, they have no hope about the support of political parties and Farmers’ Organizations sponsored by them to solve their problems. Table No.12 shows the relation of the villagers to political parties.
Table 12
Relation to Political Parties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of relation</th>
<th>No of households</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Member of a party</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active supporter</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>40.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive supporter</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indifferent to parties</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>24.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Opinion of the farmers about the support of political parties to the cause of farmers is given in Table No.13. Although vast majority of the people are either members or supporters of political parties, only 3.6% of the sample households feel that political parties have real concern for the farmers.

Table 13
Support of Political Parties on the Cause of the Farmers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opinion of farmers</th>
<th>No of household</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have real concern</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have some concern</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>32.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show only lip service</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>57.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinion reserved</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We also collected information about change in the attitude of political parties towards the cause of farmers during the last 10 years. The information on this is given in Table No.14.
Table 14
Change in the Attitude of Political Parties towards the Problem of Farmers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opinion of the respondent</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More support to farmers</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>15.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less support to farmers</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>67.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support as in the past</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No opinion</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The opinion of the respondents about less support of political parties to the cause of farmers is corroborated by declining strength of farmers’ organizations in the villages. 81.8% of the respondents reported that they are not members of any farmers’ organizations. 80% of the respondents revealed that farmers’ organizations have become weaker. 77.6% expressed their feeling that compared to 15 years ago farmers’ organizations are less powerful now. Similar reports are shared about the weakness of agricultural workers’ union as well. Agricultural Workers Union under Indian Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU) controlled by CPI (ML) has a marginal presence in the villages. From the discussion with farmers and agricultural workers, it was found that they do not nurse any hope about political parties and Farmers’/agricultural workers’ organizations sponsored by them coming to their rescue. Deprivation of the peasantry in Chiapas in Mexico under the neoliberal policy provided the fuel for the emergence of militant Zapatist Movement there. However, in India the impact of agrarian distress on the militancy of peasantry is just the opposite. The reason for this is a subject of study. Hobsbawm (1999) found ‘the death of the peasantry’ as the most dramatic and far-reaching social change to mark the twentieth century.

We asked the question why majority of them continue to be either members or supporters of political parties despite knowing that political parties and farmers’ organizations under
them do not show any real concern for their problems. The answer to this question revealed the nature of politics in the villages. While almost all the people believe that politicians are not committed to the cause of the people, they become supporters of one or the other party. They adopt such an approach to build clientele relation with some local politician to secure miscellaneous and sundry helps from them—appropriation of doles given by the government, inclusion in the BPL list, loan from co-operative bank, help from police etc. Politicians also know that they can enjoy the support of villages by showing the carrot of the sundry helps referred to above without addressing issues of basic importance. As far as this type of politics helps politicians to be safe in their saddle, they need not attend the real issues of farmers.

VIII. Demise of Civil Society

Death of Co-operatives

Along with the economic and political impacts referred to above, these villages suffer from the demise of civil society too. It is as an instrument of resistance and support to the farmers and the weaker sections against the forces of the market that Co-operative Movement emerged. The need and relevance of Co-operatives are more these days when the farmers are being victimized by the neoliberal economic policies. Cooperatives are expected to provide cheap and timely loan, make available agricultural inputs in time at cheap price and arrange marketing of the crops. However, as per reports, co-operatives are defunct in supplying inputs and arranging marketing of crops. It is in these two areas the farmers are being exploited especially under the neoliberal regime. One can argue that even co-operative marketing arrangements cannot protect the farmers from the onslaughts of the neoliberal global market. But this argument doesn’t apply in the matter of supply of inputs.

As stated above, the farmers face unprecedented scale of exploitation in the market for inputs. Therefore, if the
cooperatives can organize supply of inputs, the plight of the farmers can be improved to a great extent. But, unfortunately, the efforts of co-operatives are found conspicuously absent in this regard. Table No.15 shows the situation.

Table 15
Role of Co-operatives in Supplying of Agricultural Inputs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Input</th>
<th>No of respondents who buy from cooperatives</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seeds</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fertilizers</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pesticides</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data given in the Table reveals virtual absence of co-operatives from this vital activity of supplying agricultural inputs. The problem doesn’t end there. The nexus between politicians and private traders ensure the poor functioning of cooperatives to encourage supply of fertilizers through the private traders in the villages. Again, co-operatives keep completely away from supplying seeds.

Co-operatives concentrate only in giving loan to the farmers with sufficient amount of land. These loans are not available for poor farmers and leased-in cultivators. Further, as per reports, to get loan from the co-operatives, the farmers have to pay bribe to the politicians. This situation shows political and social disempowerment of the farming community.

End of Village Solidarity

Our interview with the farmers revealed also the disappearance of a sense of solidarity in these villages. The practice of lending and borrowing of seeds and food grains used to sustain mutual dependence between farmers in the past. Now, as a result of the practice of buying everything from the market,
occasions for mutual sharing and caring are shrinking. Whereas neighbourly love and fellowship was a virtue and a system of social insurance in Indian villages in the past, now it is being over taken by individualistic spirit. Demise of civil society is evident from the fact that all the widows whose husbands committed suicide are forced to repay the debt of their husbands with interests, and that they and their children are made bonded labourers by their creditors. As per reports, there was no intervention from the part of neighbours or social groups to persuade and pressurize the money leaders to write off the loan or at least the interest on consolation ground. This is an evidence of total demise of village solidarity which was the salient feature of peasant community in the past. Along with indebtedness, disappearance of good relations in the neighbourhood and even between members of the family is an additional reason for growing number of suicides.

Neighbourhood Groups (NHGs) are very active in these villages, and 89% of the sample households are its members. But, the ethos being promoted by NHGs are found not conducive for co-operative endeavors for common good. The villagers find NHGs useful only as an institution for taking loans easily. They do not think that NHGs can be used for fighting against oppressive forces in the society. Nor do they make NHGs to organize joint agricultural operations for common advantage.

**Conclusion**

By 1980s, while cost of cultivation increased due to dependence on GR technology, productivity faced stagnation. This situation worsened further as a result of neoliberal policy since 1990s. The influence of market forces affected farmers adversely in three ways: One, cost of inputs went up both as a result of growing monopolistic power of input suppliers and as a result of cut in inputs subsidy by the State. Two, due to the regulation of WTO regime, market for the crops of farmers in India turned against their interests. Three, cost of living of
farmers including expenses for health care, education and marriage increased directly as a result of neoliberal reforms. These developments contributed to economic deprivation of farmers and other sections in the farming community. The economic impacts of this are found in growing land alienation and suicide in the sample villages. Political disempowerment of the farming community and demise of civil society are the fundamental damages imposed by the onslaught of neoliberal economic policy.

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Acknowledgement - This is the improved version of the paper presented in the International Seminar on Depeasantisation held at ECC, Bangalore from 1 to 4 December 2008, organized jointly by Vichara School of people’s Economics, Mavelikara, India and Formosa Christianity and Culture Research Centre,
Tainan, Taiwan in association with Ecumenical Christian Centre, Bangalore. The writer acknowledges the support received by the first two organizations referred to above and his colleagues V.Mathew Kurien, R.C.Thomas, P.J.Philip and Mammen Varkey for conducting this study. Email for contact – jmitty@rediffmail.com
STRUGGLES OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE IN MEXICO FOR AUTONOMY AND LIVELIHOODS

Maria Eugenia Santana E

A brief outline of the autonomy and livelihoods of the indigenous peoples of Mexico during the twentieth century will help to understand better the current situation in this matter.

First stage: Isolation and sustainability

After the Mexican Revolution, early twentieth century, Mexican leaders were worried by the unification of the country. At that time (by the 20s of last century) Mexican indigenous people lived in very isolated communities, where people could not get more than by foot, by mule or horse.

Most indigenous people only spoke their mother tongue, did not speak Spanish, did not go to school and their world

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1 Dr. Maria Eugenia Santana is a Professor in the Department of Anthropology, University of Chiapas, Mexico. She is also a committed social activist working with the peasant movements in Latin America.
consisted of a small territory, covering a few square kilometers, which not many left in a lifetime.

Despite its isolation, the indigenous communal land holders lived on their own work - cultivating fields, i.e., planted corn, beans, squash, chili - on the same site and these products were the basis of their diet. They produced enough to live with austerity but with sufficiency. Their knowledge of ancient indigenous medicine was sufficient to escape everyday diseases, but was not able to get out of more serious illnesses. They spent their life in natural cycles that allowed them self-sustaining livelihoods, with a few basic needs not resolved by themselves: the houses built with the elements of nature and a lot of the clothes designed for women with sheep-wool or cotton.

Although the life of the natives was very austere they were self-sufficient, but post-revolutionary Mexican authorities considered them as “poor” and that it was necessary that the indigenous were "integrated" to the country's development. Thus, they founded the National Indigenous Institute from where the "indigenous policy" to plan the way these people should enter into the life of the nation. These actions were called "integration."

**Second stage: Integration**

Policies were decided from the standpoint of thinking Mestizo. That is, most Mexicans make up the race Mestizo (mixed race of the Spanish blood with Indian blood). Despite, there are Mestizo upper, middle, and low classes, with the rulers imposed by the upper class. In the 1940s the "politics of integration of indigenous peoples to the nation" began with a wide range of activities: schools were built in communities and it was decreed that all children should attend to it, that bilingual education would be to learn Spanish while speaking their mother tongue.

Clinics were built in the communities, where a doctor almost never attended and, when found, he had no medicines to serve the people. What worked in this area were the vaccination
campaigns, and many years later, the birth control, with their advantages and disadvantages.

Regarding agriculture, export crops (like coffee) were introduced in communities; so, the indigenous people began to earn money from their commercial production and, as a consequence, they had access to the capitalistic market buying products such as Coca-Cola that they didn’t need before.

**Third stage: Distorted Integration.**

Over the years, the indigenous people realized that the supposed "benefits" of being part of the Mexican nation did not translate into a better life for them. In the schools their children learn their culture to Mestizos and began to overvalue it. When they learned Spanish, many children no longer wanted to speak the native language with their parents and many young people who could read and write began to despise their parents as "ignorants".

With the introduction of Western medicine and the rapid effects of some medications, such as injections, many Indigenous people began to believe that it was the best medicine, and the various therapies and traditional knowledge of indigenous medicine were being lost for its lack of appreciation.

The land no longer yielded the fruits as before, because with the introduction of cash crops, the government gave them fertilizer and pesticides as advance payment for their harvests, forcing to use them in their land. After a few years, the land was contaminated and lost its fertility and thus no longer gave yield without chemical interventions. In addition, the population had grown and the land had to be split, so there was a large drop in agricultural production. It ceased to be self-sustaining.

Commercial crops soon ceased to have attractive prices and farmers learned that one year they could win and the following year, they could lose the work of many months, when international prices were falling. They could run out of money from one year to another and the products that they got used to
consuming they were no longer accessible, such as shoes, appliances, or refined sugar.

These developments lead the indigenous people to realize that they "are poor": they didn’t have many things the rest of the population had. They didn’t have the self-sufficiency they had before, but they didn’t want it anymore. Now they wanted to enter the market and buy the goods that the capitalist system had to offer. Many indigenous people began to leave their communities to go to work in big cities.

**Fourth stage: Exclusion**

In the mid-twentieth century, when Mexico began its industrialization, the three great cities of the country started to offer jobs that pulled migrant peasants from agricultural production. But this was not for long, in the 70s this model was exhausted and migration from rural to urban areas only increased the misery of the peasants in the cities. The indigenous were the least qualified for not mastering the language and not sharing the hegemonic cultural values of the Mestizos. The discrimination that they never suffered in their communities became the worst experience of exclusion that had ever lived.

In 70 years, Mexico had become one of the most indebted countries on the world, due to loans made to exploit the oil. But the economic boom of the oil did not result in common benefits. Instead, it was taken by a group of corrupt leaders, their friends, and their families, increasing the gap between the rich and the poor. Since then economic polarization became the fundamental characteristic of the Mexican people. One of the richest men in the world is a Mexican.

The economic crisis made Mexico to suffer since the late '70s, and which has complicated the lives of all people, especially the poor, among who are the indigenous people. The problem of scarcity of employment opportunities in urban centers has exacerbated with the enforcement of the “economic adjustment measures” by the International Monetary Fund and World Bank. Their “recipes for adjustments” imposed on
governments of debtor countries, forced them to reduce "public expenditure" which in short, is the small contribution of the state to the impoverished masses. The first thing to be cut down was the supports to the countryside, many of which came to the hands of indigenous people. Public health clinics were closed down and education in schools was no longer a priority for the nation. Many teachers in bilingual basic schools became indigenous caciques of communities, forcing girls to have sex with them, and their parents have turned into accomplices.

In the past decades, heads of households had to migrate seasonally from indigenous communities to farm capitals, where the work hours are more than 12, and payment consists of little food and a few pesos, plus a bottle of alcoholic drink. In Chiapas, the oligarchy rationalize the practice claiming that the indigenous people were accustomed to live in poor conditions and can endure that and more (the great classics of Mexican literature narrate the starkness of this stage).

Life in indigenous communities was becoming untenable without enough food, with broken families (men always working "far") and the caciques exploiting women and their daughters. Not even working tirelessly, they could ensure their livelihood.

**Fifth stage: The Zapatista uprising**

On 1 January 1994, a large number of indigenous people of Chiapas declared the war to the "bad government" that kept hunger under regimes in total neglect and exclusion. The indigenous were not asking to the government to provide money or food, but that they should respect the autonomy of their own governments in their communities, ensure fair prices for their products, and that education and health services were given with respect to the dignity of the indigenous traditions and cultures.

The name "Zapatista" comes from Zapata, who was an agrarian leader of the Mexican Revolution, whose battle cry was "Land and Freedom". So now the neo-Zapatistas seek autonomy in their territories, they want to recover the customs that allowed
grandparents to be self-sustaining and cultivating the land without the use of agro-chemicals; regain their knowledge of Maya Medicine and that their language is respected not only in schools but in courts and in other areas (which should have translators when needed). In Mexico more than 50 indigenous languages are spoken with variants.

Indigenous people from other parts of the country and many Mestizos who support the cause have joined the Zapatista movement. However, despite the importance of this movement, we can not say that all indigenous people identify themselves with it; some even criticize the Zapatistas for reasons such as refusing to receive any support from the "bad government".

Many other sectors of the Mexican society are fighting for the sustainability and the autonomy in their territories, ignoring the Zapatistas causes; a big sector of the population fights against the privatization of Mexican petroleum; other groups, reject the construction of dams; and others reject the mining operation (that has appeared again after a long abandonment, becoming the business of transnational companies and has provoked infections for numerous towns and barren territories). Many institutions of the Civil Society are consolidating their efforts with social researchers for the defense of human rights, especially around the killings of women in the north of the country, and others are starting to get organized to prevent the drug trafficking which accounts for many lives. There are several other pertinent questions that the poor people concerns including the opening of a hospital or a school for handicapped children.

The Zapatistas have been somewhat insensitive to almost all of these struggles. Maybe one of their most glowing weaknesses is “self-absorption” as we say in Mexico when we refer to not paying attention to what’s happening all around you. It is likely that the Zapatistas suggestion ‘to not vote’ during the 2006 presidential race may have played a part in there being a very close and debatable margin in the vote. If that hadn’t happened, Mexico might have formed part of the increasingly
progressive Latin American movement—the Bolivarian movement, which stirs the heartbeat of villagers and is gaining more and more advocates. Mexico is being excluded from that because we have a government that doesn’t identify with that perspective.

**The Sixth Phase: The present**

It’s difficult to think of a united social movement in a country as vast and incommunicado as Mexico. (For example, Mexicans pay one of the highest prices for telephone and Internet services throughout the World. These services are in the hands of a monopoly which represent the power of a man who has, at times, been considered as the richest man in the globe; their fortunes have been amassed with the complicity and permission of the government closely allied with an economically powerful class). However, it should be noted that the great contribution of the Zapatistas is their example of struggle; they have shown that things can change, but not alone. Many sectors of the population, not just indigenous communities, not just Mexicans, are excited with the Zapatista utopia and have been supporting in different ways. This has denatured the idea of the poverty of the indigenous people.

Today in Mexico struggles for autonomy are not only territorial, as posed by the Zapatistas. There are movements that seek autonomy and maintenance that are very diverse. And perhaps the most innovative thing about them is that they are not exclusive groups of "the Indigenous" or "the poor people" or excluded sectors, but of a collaborative movement of the indigenous people, the Mestizos, poor women, academicians, professionals, social activists, and so on. What characterizes social movements is cooperation rather than isolated actions.

In that sense, the Alternative Economy, together with the slogan of the World Social Forums, "another world is possible!", spread rapidly through the alternative means of communication, as well as through academia and civil society organizations. This is an inclusive proposal that is already being
put in action. Hopefully, the Zapatistas will join and be part of this change in which they can participate as one of the collective actors.
BUY US AND OUR LAND TO BECOME SLAVES TO PHARAOH: A THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON DEPEASANTIZATION IMPOSED BY GLOBALIZATION

Huang Po Ho¹

Now there was no food in all the land, for the famine was very severe. The land of Egypt and the land of Canaan languished because of the famine. Joseph collected all the money to be found in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan. In exchange for the grain that they bought; and Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh house. When the money from the land of Egypt and from the land of Canaan was spent, all the Egyptians came to Joseph, and said, “Give us food! Why should we die before your eyes? For our money is gone.” And Joseph answered, “Give me your livestock, and I will give you food in exchange for your

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livestock, if your money is gone.” So they brought their livestock to Joseph; and Joseph gave them food in exchange for the horses, the flocks, the herds, and the donkeys. That year he supplied them with food in exchange for all livestock. When that year was ended, they came to him the following year, and said to him, “we can not hide from my lord that our money is all spent; and the herds of cattle are my lord’s. There is nothing left in the sight of my lord but our bodies and our lands. Shall we die before your eyes, both we and our land? Buy us and our land in exchange for food. We with our land will become slaves to Pharaoh; just give us seed, so that we may live and not die, and that the land may not become desolate.”

So Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh. All the Egyptians sold their fields, because the famine was severe upon them; and the land became Pharaoh’s. As for the people, he made slaves of them from one end of Egypt to the other. Only the land of the priest he did not buy; for the priests had a fixed allowance from Pharaoh, and lived on the allowance that Pharaoh gave them; therefore they did not sell their land. Then Joseph said to the people, “Now that I have this day bought you and your land for Pharaoh, here is seed for you; sow the land. And at the harvests you should give one-fifths to Pharaoh, and four-fifths shall be your own, as seed for the field and as food for your selves and your households, and as food for your little ones.” They said, “you have saved our lives; may it please my lord, we will be slaves to Pharaoh.” So Joseph made it a statute concerning the land of Egypt, and it stands to this day, that Pharaoh should have the fifth. The land of the priests alone did not become Pharaoh’s.

Gen 47.13-26

No Food in All the Land?

The impacts of globalization on agriculture are manifold. Among the major changes initiated by liberalized trade system
of markets are the distorted changes in the concept of labor, land, and product. The term depeasantization is a representation of these distortions done to the life and society of the farmers, men and women. The results caused by depeasantization affects our life in different levels: psychologically, it caused an alienation of farmers from their lands and products, alienation in between the peasants and the consumers of their products. Economically, it exercised cruel exploitation of the farmers and the poorer group of the consumers. Free market system stimulates human desires and encourages competition, thus the rich become richer, and the poor poorer. And these inevitably lead the poor peasants to experience domination and discrimination in social and cultural aspects as well. Put it in another word, depeasantization is nothing but a synonym to dehumanization.

The traditional claims of scientists that development of technologies will bring blessings to the life of people and has the ability to solve the problems confronted by our societies are only partly true. Of course there are certain benefits to the general society with the advancement of science and technology which is beyond rejection, and moreover for a small section of society, hi-tech development was boom in transforming their style of life. However, in reality, for majority of the people around the world, suffering of hunger and poverty has only increased both in its quantity and quality under the so-called successful perusal of the high technologies. Is not this ring the bell of what the prophet Amos warns us:

“The time is surely coming, says the Lord God, when I will send a famine on the land; not a famine of bread, or a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord. They shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east; they shall run to and fro, seeking the word of the Lord, but they shall not find it. (Amos 8. 11-12).
What we are facing today under globalization is not the lack of foods or technologies to produce foods, but the problem of consumption and distribution in which love and justice are missing.

The Genesis passage quoted above unravels the secret of the economic games played by the dominant class. The background provided by the writer of the passage was “there was no food in all the land”, this announcement has justified all kind of the trade, even the trade of human body, to happen in our world and to our life. But was it true that there was no food in all the land? At least the concept of “this land” did not include the store house of the Pharaoh controlled by Joseph.

**Buy us and our land**

If the poverty and hunger are not caused by the shortages of foods and technologies to produce foods but caused by the lack of justice and brotherly and sisterly love of human society, then the discourse on depeasantization cannot be limited to technical knowledge for improving farmers’ productivity neither to the studies of social system and state policies, though which are certainly important factors for the creation of the inhuman realities in societies. Instead, one has to extend the investigations into the area of human nature of self-centric interest and insecure feelings regarding the existence of their own self.

Take the example of the Genesis story again, the insight that Joseph got from the dreams of the Pharaoh about the impending famine does not help him to develop a mechanism to alert and help the people to preserve foods for themselves, but instead he developed a system of accumulation for Pharaoh to monopolize the grains and goods during the period of misery that people faced, and to wait for a better price and even better chance of exploitation. The monopolized market of foods though strengthened the ruling power of Pharaoh, yet has created tragic life to the producers of foods and goods and to those people consuming them. There must have been a strong
motivation behind Joseph when he proposed to Pharaoh his strategy to overcome famine. He said:

*Now therefore let Pharaoh select a man who is discerning and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt. Let Pharaoh proceed to appoint overseers over the land, and take one-fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt during the seven plenteous years. Let them gather all the food of these good years that are coming, and lay up grain under the authority of Pharaoh for food in the cities, and let them keep it. That food shall be a reserve for the land against the seven years of famine that are to befall the land of Egypt, so that the land may not perish through the famine.(Gen. 41.33-36)*

It is without doubt a “wise” proposal to overcome the crisis of famine. However, this “wisdom” is informed by the interests of Pharaoh rather than of his people. Regardless the ambiguities surrounding the fairness of the grain collection mechanisms operated in the first seven years, the “wise” officer of Pharaoh has taken the advantage of this natural disaster to force people to sell all their land and even their bodies to Pharaoh. “Buy *us and our land*” when the people were driven unto the dead end, they had no choice but give up themselves.

Isn’t the bizarre rate of suicide happening in peasant communities voiced out of the same cry of “Buy *us and our land*”? A suicide cannot be taken lightly. Any person committed to end his/her life must have accumulated tremendous anguish and despair. “No Exit!” is the sign on the gate of the suicides. The high walls that block the ways of the poor and lead them to suicides are an injustice and reflects the mercilessness of their circumstance. Thus they have to give themselves up. “Buy *us and our land!*” what other words in the human language can express stronger than this profession of self-abandonment?

The globalized capitalism has upheld the values of free market, which undermined human activities by the dogma of freedom of money and commodities which eventually demanded
the sacrifice of human life on the altar of market. Under the forces of globalization, being aware or not, we are all forced to sell ourselves to be slaves to the capitals and capitalists. Free market is not free; capital (money) owns the final say. Enslavement of the human being is the very nature of free market system. This enslavement extends itself to nature and ecologies.

The Land of the Priest: Seeking Alternatives?

Much about the evil impact of globalization to the human life and societies has been discussed and revealed over the years. We are consistently warned of the irresistible nature of the globalization process as it has been deeply involved in modern civilization through the entanglements of the development of hi-technologies, political ideologies, and even the military forces. When socialist regimes of Eastern Europe collapsed in the late eighties and early nineties, capitalist scholars from Western nations celebrated the end of the socialist system and they declare the final victory of capitalism. The world was almost convinced that free market doctrine is a gospel to be added to the human Bible. Nevertheless, the recent international financial crisis has revealed the weakness within the principles that govern globalization. The Bush administration and its capitalist comrades have declared through their actions to intervene in the monetary market that free market principles are only meant for the dominated nations and peoples, not for the capitalists and certainly not for the empires. In other words, free trade dogma is nothing but a tool of exploitation used by the capitalists. When the threat points towards the direction of the holders of capital, they changed their rules in the name of saving the world.

Can exception be the alternative? It is the matter of the economists. However, viewing the situation from the peasants’ experiences, to develop different strategies from different contexts is confirmed necessary and possible. Even Joseph, who had implemented the massive plan of monopoly of the food
policy for Pharaoh, accepted certain exceptions; he allowed priests to keep their own land:

*Only the land of the priest he did not buy; for the priests had a fixed allowance from Pharaoh, and lived on the allowance that Pharaoh gave them; therefore they did not sell their land.*

The independent status of being a priest in ancient societies has granted the exemption for the priests to sell themselves to be slaves (or you may say that the priest by receiving the fixed allowance has the ability to resist the likelihood of becoming a slave of Pharaoh) and to keep their land. The fixed allowance that the privileged class of priests received that prevent them from selling themselves and their lands is an exception, just like the Bush administration has recently to violated the dogma of liberalized trade to intervene the monetary markets for the sake of their state interests. Does the concept of exception only be invented by the dominants to strengthen their ruling powers? Can people of the dominated class such as the peasants invent their own way of exception to break through the high walls built by the empires and their cohorts? Yes, exception is a possible way to find exit out of no exit; it is a potential alternative. Does not the parable of the “Laborers in the vineyard” stated in the Gospel of Matthew (20. 1-16) indicate that Jesus was also applying this concept of “exception” to sustain the life of the poor day-pay workers and their family?

One of the important questions to ponder is the feasibility of Taiwanese agriculture to sustain itself through the traditional way of farming. When its land is so limited and the farmer population is not only decreasing rapidly but forced to engage in salaried jobs to maintain life, what is the future of agricultural economy? The other interesting fact is the complex relationship with WTO. Because of the political isolation of Taiwan from the international community’s as a nation, WTO entry brought a special significance the nation and thus the impact of this new relationship with respect to agricultural
economy and peasants were not a point of discussion. Although
the WTO has been considered as part of an unholy trinity of the
economic world along with IMF and World Bank, it is one of
the very few worldwide organizations that Taiwan is able to
participate in. To join the WTO, even aware of its many
negative impacts to the society, has been considered a
significant achievement by the government and people in
Taiwan. Any ill-effects are underrated in this breakthrough of
international isolation. What does it means? Does the entry into
the WTO indicate a privilege as the political pundits in Taiwan
may claim? Or does it signal an unprivileged status of the
agrarian situation of Taiwan compared to that of other third
world nations? And what will be the main tasks of the churches,
Christians, and conscientized people in Taiwan to be committed
with in this specific situation?