
Issues and Challenges of Depeasantization in Contemporary Kashmir (India): A Sociological Analysis

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Abstract: *Depeasantization refers to the erosion of peasant practices and the substitution of market rationality in agriculture. Over the past several decades, in Kashmir peasants are facing a lot of issues and challenges as a result of depeasantization, they are pushed out from the agricultural sector due to urbanization, poverty, decreasing productivity, government snatching land forcibly from the peasants for developmental projects, lack of marketing facilities, lack of irrigation facilities and low or no subsidy provided by the government to the marginal and small peasants, high inputs and low outputs etc. In this context, the present study has been prepared in order to know the various issues and challenges of depeasantization in contemporary Kashmir. Based on a sample of 250 respondents and using an intensive approach through the case study method and interview schedule, the study has been carried out in the rural areas of Pulwama district of the Kashmir valley, it also intends to provide certain suggestions for the policy makers. The author found that there has been a significant impact on these variables.*

Keywords: *Depeasantization, issues & challenges, Pulwama district, Kashmir*

1. Introduction

Depeasantization is a specific form of de-agrarianization in which peasants lose their economic capacity, social coherence and demographically shrink in size (Araghi, A. Farshad.1999). The survival and persistence of peasantries in a globalizing and ever more commodified world have been puzzling social scientists for a long time now. Time and again, the demise of the peasant was announced by capitalists, by intellectuals, by national and development planners, indeed, by virtually everyone but the peasants themselves. (Desmarais, A. A. 2007). However, as Wallerstein has reminded us: What is surprising is not that there has been so much proletarianisation, but there has been so little. Four hundred years at least into the existence of a historical system, the amount of fully proletarianized labour in the capitalist world-economy today cannot be said to total even fifty percent. (Wallerstein, 2003). The very notion of peasants and peasantries confronts us more than anything else with the flaws of traditional/mainstream economic development theory. The understanding of old and new ‘agrarian questions’ asks for new historical knowledge about the role of peasantries within the long-term transformations in the capitalist world-system. The mainstream image of the peasant and of peasantries is still deformed by a twofold myopia. First, the much praised English Road to capitalist agriculture, built on rapid depeasantization, seems not to have been the standard road to development (Altieri & Nicholls 2005). The quasi permanent transformation of peasantries and small scale agriculture within the expansion of the modern world-economy is much more the ‘normal’ journey of the peasants of the world. Secondly, the inevitability

of the European Experience, the dissolution of the peasant societies within industrial and post-industrial economies, is not and cannot be the example for most of the non-Western world. Being at the top of the modern world-system, nineteenth and twentieth century Europe could rather easily and cheaply dismantle its rural economies, by importing the basic products it needed from and exporting the surplus labour to its old and new colonies. For most of the world, this is a very different story today (McMichael 2006). Looking beyond the old premises of westernized development we can see a different picture. This is a picture of family based agricultural societies that have always been and still are highly productive systems, and that combine diversified production chains and multiple strategies of risk minimalization with locally and regionally anchored income and exchange systems. These include performant, but controlled markets, secured access to land and guaranteed rights of use of common goods such as water and natural resources (Vanhaute 2008). This essay tries to understand the survival of the peasantry as a social process within historical capitalism.

1.1. Historical evolution of agrarian relations

The agrarian system of Jammu and Kashmir state was basically feudal in nature and the cultivators suffered greatly due to heavy taxation and levy on the cultivated produce. Apart from the heavy revenue demand peasants had to pay all kinds of taxes and above all was the system of “beggar” (corvee) for transportation purposes of collected crops in form of levy during Lohara Dynasty 1003-1320 AD (Hassan 1959) and Sikh rule 1819-1846 AD (Aggarwal & Aggarwal 1995). Only those who pleased the kings were bestowed with land in form of Jagirs or Muafis. Some of the leading officials of the state administration also got some land as privilege and came to be known as Chakdars (Bhat 2007). Later the main demand of the National Conference movement 1938, started with an objective of transfer of ownership rights on land from the Maharaja to the peasants (Parashar 2004).

1.2. Impact of colonial rule on agrarian system

Before the introduction of land reform measures (Ernst & Biswomay 2007), since 1863 peasants of the state were oppressed by heavy burden of taxes in the form of cash and kind (Bhat 2007). Taxes were levied in kind for Shali and wheat and in cash on smaller crops like tobacco. The rulers used various occasions and ceremonies to levy, different types of taxes which were eventually collected from the cultivators with a large number of intermediaries consisting of state officials and community representatives. In 1892 the British reiterated the system of tax collection in kind and commenced it in cash. This move in agriculture of the state resulted in the advocacy of grain trade headed by Zaildars and Choukidars, the colonial administrators could not and did not change the basic structure of landholdings or the revenue collecting agency, the change introduced by them was in regard to grain trade which resulted in a form of an economic change in valley of Kashmir (Bakshi, S. R. 1995).

2. Review of literature

(Bryceson, F. D. 2018) in the study reveals that deagrarianization is essentially a multi-dimensional process of change involving: livelihood reorientation, occupational work adjustment, spatial realignment of residential settlement and social re-identification, all entailing movement

away from agrarian patterns in local, regional and economies. The author points out that deagrarinization is on-going in Africa resulting in a process of sectoral transformation, evidenced by a declining proportion of the national population and total labour time engaged in agriculture. Over the last several decades, statistical indicators of agricultural labour time expenditure, volume and value of product output, as well as survey data and qualitative interviews have increasingly documented this trend. The net outcome of this process is the declining value of agricultural output relative to other sectors of national production. (Dora, Saraiah. E. 2016) in the study admitted that in 2014, the National Crime Records Bureau of India reported 5,650 farmer suicides. The highest numbers of farmer suicides were recorded in 2004 when 18,241 farmers committed suicide. The farmer's suicide rate in India has ranged between 1.4 and 1.8 per 100,000 total populations, over a 10-year period through 2005. India is an agrarian country with around 60 percent of its people depending directly or indirectly upon agriculture. Farmer suicides account for 11.2 percent of all suicides in India. Activists and scholars have offered a number of conflicting reasons for farmer suicides, such as monsoon failure, high debt burdens, genetically modified crops, government policies, public mental health, personal issues and family problems. (Araghi, A. Farshad. 1999) in the study says that my analysis, i hope, shows that peasants are neither sui generis entity, nor should they be reduced to ideal typical categories; peasantries exist in global social processes that constitute, and are constituted by, other processes of the world political economy. Similarly, linking the changes in the condition of existence of the postwar peasantries to the transformation of the world economy and polity, the authors distinguishes between two phases of global depeasantization. The ensembles of economic, political, and ideological processes within each phase were distinct, as were the corresponding processes of depeasantization.

3. Research methodology

3.1. Universe of the study

The universe of the present study constitutes Pulwama district of Kashmir valley as it has been worst hit by the process of depeasantization as compared to other districts. The thrust areas were Lethpora, Pampore, Lasipora, Lasjan, Kakpora, Ratnipora, Rajpora, Koil, Malangpora and Awantipora (10 villages in total). As per census 2011, the total literacy rate of the district Pulwama was 65 percent; 75.41 percent of males and 53.81 percent of females, respectively. The district consisted 328 villages, 5 towns and total population was 5, 60,440 persons out of which urban population was 80,462 while as rural was 4, 79,978 and it had a total of 40,658 rural households.

3.2. Sampling plan and design of the study

The sampling plan of the present study is based on a sample of 250 respondent's selected through cluster and purposive sampling method from rural areas of Pulwama district of Kashmir. Descriptive research design was used to get information from the respondents within the study area and the information was collected through interview schedule. One village from each thrust area was taken for study and out of each village 25 households were chosen for study (25×10=250) which formed the sample of the study

3.3. Objectives of the study

1. To trace the issues and problems regarding depeasantization in Kashmir.
2. To provide certain recommendation for policy makers.

4. Results and discussions

The findings of the study are as follows:

4.1. Necessary measures and initiatives should be taken into consideration in order to tackle and address the problems of depeasantization

Kashmir agriculture is largely an unorganized sector no systematic and institutional planning are involved in cultivation and irrigation. So the main thing to do for peasants is that they should provide all facilities like kisan credit, crop insurance facility, irrigation facility, fair price for their produce. In this context, the respondents were asked to express their view as showed in the below table:

Table 1: Measures and initiatives to tackle and address the problems of depeasantization

Theme	Response	Number	Percentage
Necessary measures and initiatives should be taken into consideration in order to tackle and address the problems of depeasantization	Yes	250	100.00
	No	0	0.00
Total		250	100.00

Source: Field work carried out in rural Kashmir, 2018

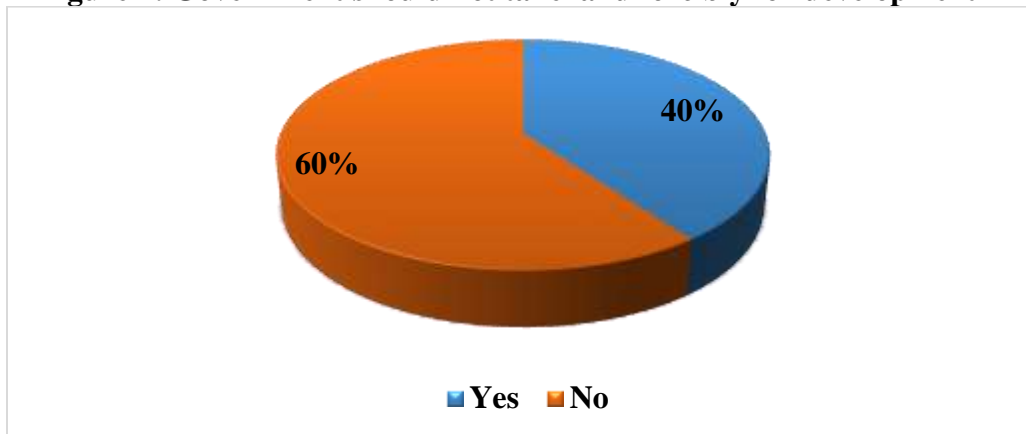
The above table depicts that out of 250 respondents all the respondents (100 percent), admitted that government should take necessary measures and initiatives in order to tackle and address the problems of depeasantization in Kashmir. In Kashmir agriculture is declining day by day to the large extent. It was analyzed in the study that government policies are the same for agriculture in Kashmir from last several decades no new policy have been formed yet government of Jammu and Kashmir is constructing only roads and bridges there is not any kind of attention of government towards marketing problem. The prices of all the inputs is reached on the sky but the peasants did not get proper selling prices at the end of the season. Government should provide quality of seeds, fertilizer good water facilities to the marginal and small peasant. If the government take decisions to make new policies or make amendments in old agricultural policies and create awareness programmes among peasants the process of depeasantization will decrease. In the similar trend Dar, A. Bilal (2018)³ in the study points out that farmers require quality seeds, water fertilizer, farm machinery, research and extension for maximum production for farmers in Kashmir. He admitted that there is no improved and certified seeds for the small farmers in the state and there is no soil testing; fertilizer and chemicals are also a gap in policies related to agriculture.

4.2. Government should not take land forcibly for developmental projects

Land acquisition is a process in which government acquire land forcibly from the concerned land owner for the purpose of development of infrastructural facilities, industrialization,

urbanization in return government provide compensation to the affected people and the facility of rehabilitation and resettlement and so on. In this context, the respondents were asked to reveal their ideas which as showed in the below table:

Figure 1: Government should not take land forcibly for development



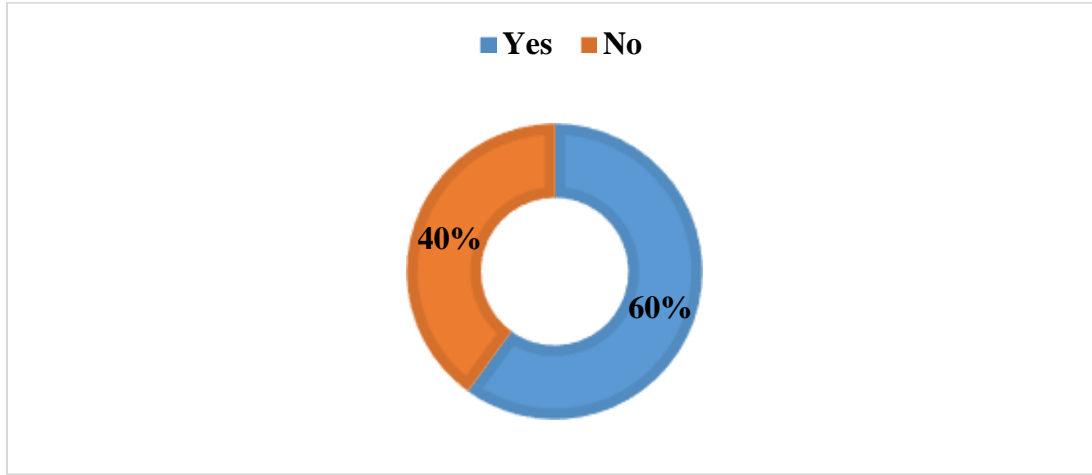
Source: Field work carried out in rural Kashmir, 2018

The above study depicts that out of 250 respondents (100 percent), 50 respondents (40 percent) were admitted that government should not acquire land forcibly for the development of projects and remaining 150 respondents (60 percent) were agreed that government should not acquire land forcibly. It was observed that majority of the respondents did not agreed with the view. In most of the cases government acquired land become homeless government promises them to provide better jobs in service sectors and better land compensation but they fails with their promises neither they get jobs on time and nor a proper compensation of the land by the government. No doubt, government has started development but on the other hand peasants are being pushed out of agriculture sector and simanitounsely the lost their small piece of land and traditional work and this has tremendous impact on agriculture and peasants social and economic day to day life.

4.3. Rural poverty should be addressed so that rural people may not sell their land

Poverty is one of the most widespread socio-economic problems of rural Kashmir and India as well. It is not only socio-economic but even emotional, cultural and political in nature. Poverty has been the root cause of many of the problems. In this context, the respondents were asked to express their views as showed in the below table:

Figure 2: Rural poverty should be addressed rural people may not sell their land



Source: Field work carried out in rural Kashmir, 2018

The above figure depicts that out of 250 respondents (100 percent), 150 respondents (60 percent) admitted that rural poverty should be addressed so that rural people may not sell their land and remaining 100 respondents (40 percent) were not agree with the statement. It was observed by the study that majority of the respondents acclaimed that rural people in Kashmir sell their land due to poverty. Farmers in Kashmir now interested to move towards social sector they provide well education to their children for that purpose they sell their agricultural land. It was observed that unemployment is the main cause for depeasantization in Kashmir, small and marginal farmers sold their agricultural land because they don't found any other source to earn huge amount of money.

4.4. Rural people should aware about the negative implications of depeasantization

Depeasantization is itself a problem. Rural people directly or indirectly dependent upon agriculture, emotionally they are attached with the land through cultivation they fulfill their basic needs. In this context, the respondents were asked to reveals their ideas which as shows in the below table.

Table 2: Rural people aware about Negative implications of depeasantization

Theme	Response	Number	Percentage
Do you think that rural people should aware about the negative implications of depeasantization	Yes	140	56.00
	No	60	24.00
Total		250	100.00

Source: Field work carried out in rural Kashmir, 2018

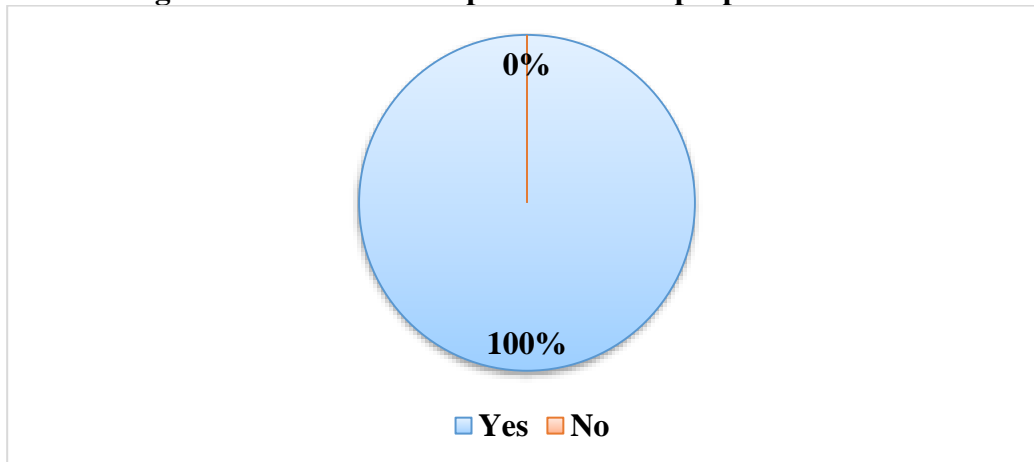
The above table depicts that out of 250 respondents, 140 respondents (56 percent) admitted that rural people should made aware about the negative implications of depeasantization and 60 respondents (24 percent) were not agreed with this view. It was observed in the study that rural economy is mostly agricultural based economy, in terms of food urban people are also dependent on villages they import different types of vegetables, rice, wheat from villages. Shrinking agricultural land has drastic repercussion it reduces food for common masses. Marginal and small

peasants face lot of challenges in their day to day life. Government and agriculture policy makers should made aware to the rural people about the impact of depeasantization.

4.5. Need for overall development of rural people

There is need for overall development of rural people in Kashmir. Because most of the rural people in Kashmir are facing so many problem like roads, hospital, schools colleges, lack of infrastructure, health, education etc. Because most of the people in rural areas are directly or indirectly dependent on agriculture. In this context the respondents are asked to reveal their ideas as shows in the below table.

Figure 3: Over all development of rural people in Kashmir



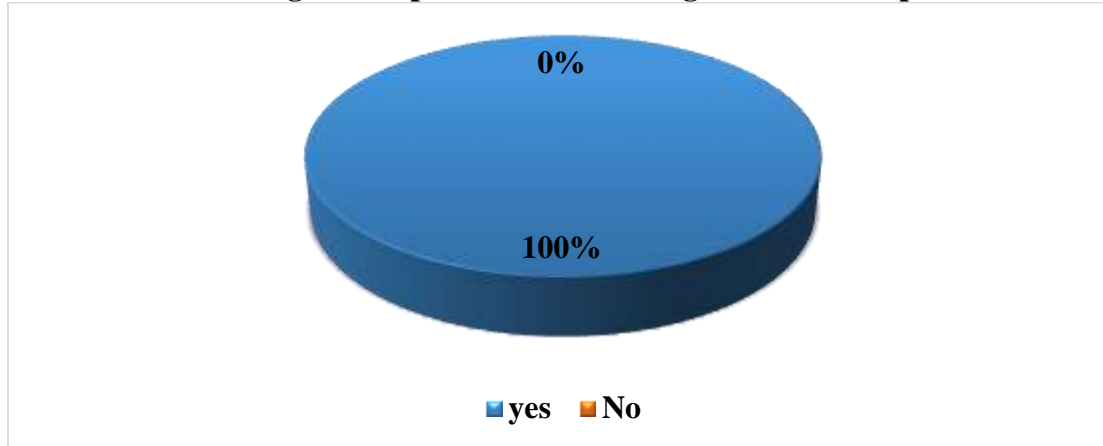
Source: Field work carried out in rural Kashmir, 2018

The above table depicts that out of 250 respondents (100 percent), all the respondents admitted that there is need for overall development of rural people in Kashmir. It was observed during field study that most of the rural areas in Kashmir are still undeveloped in terms of education, lack of hospital, schools, colleges, dams, bridges peasants want to educate their children when they don't get these kind of facilities in the rural areas they prefer to sell their land and shows less interest in the agriculture sector which ultimately lead to the process of depeasantization. In the present day modern society peasant major concern is to educate their children but when they can't afford to live in the urban areas they sell their agricultural land.

4.6. Developmental policies must give special focus for marginal and small peasants

Development refers to a process of structural and societal changes within the society. Agrarian societies in Kashmir are not developed over the decades. Most of the peasants in Kashmir are facing so many challenges and problem during cultivation like marketing problem, shortage fertile land, lack of irrigation facilities, transport. Marginal and small peasant class always ignored by the government while framed the agricultural policies. In this context, the respondents were asked to express their ideas which are showed as in the below table:

Figure 4: Special focus for marginal and small peasants



Source: Field work carried out in rural Kashmir, 2018

The above study reveals that out of 250 respondents (100 percent) respondents, acclaimed that agricultural development policies must give special focus for marginal and small peasants. It was noted in the study that agricultural policies in Kashmir were the same from several decades government has not initiated any new policy for the development of agricultural sector. Mostly subsidies and welfare schemes announced by the central government do not reach to the small and marginal peasants due to favoritism, nepotism and corruption only rich peasants are benefited by those schemes. In the similar trend Lal, Suresh. B. & Macharla, Iiaiah (2017)⁴ in the study “issues and problems of small and marginal farmers: a study in karim nagar district” admitted that Indian agriculture is largely an unorganized sector. No systematic institutional and organizational planning is involved in cultivation, irrigation, harvesting etc. Institutional finances are not adequately available and minimum purchase price fixed by the government do not reach the poorest farmer.

5. Conclusion

In the light of above findings of the study it has been concluded that depeasantization is one of the major problem in the agrarian sector of Kashmir. Agricultural land has been replaced into commercial purpose as a result of poverty land occupied forcibly by government for the development projects, it has been also observed in the study that most of the fertile land is occupied by government forces and peasants are dragged out from the agricultural land which also led to depeasantization. However, the peasants who are still working on the agricultural land shows less interested to work in the farming sector due to low or no subsidy provided by the government to the marginal and small peasants, lack of irrigation facilities, lack of road connectivity, lack of crop insurance and so on. They have no choice to work in their agricultural land either they shift their land for business purpose or sell it for other profitable job.

6. Recommendations of the study

The recommendations of the study are as follows:

1. Government should not occupy land forcibly from the peasants for developmental projects, if they take land they must give proper compensation or agricultural land in other places so that peasants can continue their farming work.
2. There should be marketing facility available so that peasants can sell their products easily in the market.
3. Government should take care of the marginal and small peasants, they should provide crop insurances facility, subsidy, free seeds, fertilizers etc.
4. In the rural areas government should make good road connectivity, health facilities, irrigation facilities, educational infrastructure etc.

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