

## EVOLUTION OF THE THEORY OF CLASS DIFFERENTIATION: A STUDY OF THE HISTORICAL DEBATES BETWEEN MARXISM AND POPULISM

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### ABSTRACT

The predominant discourse in the extensive examination of agricultural transition, its causes and effects are characterized by the historical debates between Marxism and Populism. Kautsky and Lenin made the primary contributions to this argument. In his important work “The Development of Capitalism in Russia,” Lenin presented the concept of socio-economic differentiation and its dependence on the emergence of capitalism. He contested the Russian populists (Narodnik’s), who asserted that the peasantry constituted a homogeneous unit, unaffected by class differentiation. In the 1960s, A.V. Chayanov revitalized these populist notions through his freshly translated work, which reintroduced the concept of homogeneous peasants in developing countries. He redefined this uniform group of peasants as an alternative mode of production; that is, rather than economic differentiation being influenced by external factors (such as rent, labour, and land markets), this self-sustaining population was governed by internal and distinctly non-economic dynamics, characterized by a process of cyclically determined demographic differentiation. This paper aims to consolidate these historical and debates as it still holds deep relevance in the socio-economic structures or rural communities.

**Keywords:** *Socio-Economic Differentiation, Neo-Populism, Marxism, Peasantry*

### INTRODUCTION

Rural peasantry is a persisting phenomenon, even in modern era, and, in fact, they play a crucial role in terms of population, productivity, and political influence. The construction of the appeal or agrarian program is contingent upon which specific portion of different “socio-economic class” of the peasantry can be persuaded or convinced to support it (Byres T. , 1989). The agrarian question, as perceived by Marxist theoreticians and strategists in the late nineteenth century, arose from the political challenge of seizing control of nations that still possessed significant rural populations. Engels emphasized this point in one of his influential Marxist texts from that time period, “The Peasant Question in France and Germany”, published in 1894. In his work, Engels observed that the small peasant class was under significant strain due to the disruptions caused by capitalist influence in rural areas. In 1899, two comprehensive and notable Marxist analyses of the agrarian situation were published, five years following Engels’ paper. One of the books mentioned was Kautsky’s “Die-Agrarfrage”, while the other was Lenin’s “Development of Capitalism in Russia”. Both individuals diligently pursued their examination of the agricultural question through empirical methods. Kautsky investigated data from Germany, France, Britain, and the USA, while Lenin focused on Russia. Lenin presented his argument on the “socio-economic differentiation”

of the peasantry and its crucial role in the development of capitalism. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, there was a discussion between Marxists and Populists over the process of divergence within the peasant class and the transition of agriculture. In the 1880s, V.P. Vorontsov and N. Danielson, the prominent economic theorists of Russian populism, argued that capitalism in Russia would not succeed due to two factors, viz. the limited domestic market and the lack of potential as an exporter in the international market. Their argument was based on assumption of a homogeneous and self-sufficient peasantry. The primary Marxist contributions to this argument were made by (Kautsky, 1988) and (Lenin, 1977). Lenin's recognition of social differentiation directly contradicted the beliefs of "Narodnik"<sup>1</sup> or populist intellectuals, who thought that there was no establishment of social classes within the peasantry and consequently no social differentiation or growth of capitalism. These Russian Populists believed that the peasantry constituted an 'homogenous group' that was not influenced by any form of differentiation, a notion upheld by A.V Chayanov. Contrary to Lenin's Marxist perspective on differentiation, he proposed a distinct and non-economic process of demographic differentiation that is cyclically driven and ongoing. The logic of distinction he employed was based on correlation between family size and farm size, with farm size being the primary determinant of a peasant's wealth. He argued that the size of farms typically corresponded to the cycle of family growth. Lenin argued that capitalism had already become the prevailing force in the Russian countryside. This was evident through the presence of two opposing social classes, viz. those who bought or sold labour power in the capitalist market, and a significant number of peasants who had been deprived of their means of production (primarily land) and were now working as labourers. The Narodniks held a different opinion, arguing that the introduction of capitalism would cause rural poverty, which in turn would lead to a collapse of the domestic market due to the limited purchasing power of the majority of peasants. Lenin contested this notion and demonstrated that the contrary was true, viz., as capitalist production emerged and money, market, and exchange relations became more dominant, people were certainly consuming less, but they were compelled to make more purchases. Lenin contended that the advancement of capitalism is linked to the establishment of a domestic market, which encompasses both the supply of labour and the products of labour.

### **Neo-Populism and the Idea of Homogenous Peasantry**

Small-scale farming is a crucial component of agriculture, not just in India but also globally. Consequently, there is a substantial body of academic research exploring the perspectives on small-scale farming. Many researchers assert that small-scale farming possesses numerous qualities and argue that it is a more efficient and ecologically sound method of production compared to large-scale farms. (Chappell, et al., 2013) asserts that extensive research conducted over the past few decades has consistently shown that the small-scale and family farming sector significantly contributes to both environmental sustainability and the livelihoods of farmers. (Sandhu, et al., 2015), asserts that the actual economic impact of these small farmers on the global economy exceeds 2.2 trillion. According to (Barrett, Bellemare, & Hou, 2019), small-scale agriculture exhibits higher productivity levels and demonstrates greater sustainability and resilience. Studies conducted by (Holt-Gimenez, 2002) in 2002 argue that small farms have a greater scope for employment opportunities and generate higher income levels within local economies. The study conducted by (Lyson, Torres, & Welsh, 2001) suggests that small farms possess a greater amount of agro-biodiversity and play a significant role in promoting dietary diversity. Moreover, the research conducted by (Graueb, et al., 2016) reveals that small-scale

farming is a crucial factor in determining overall food security. Several experts assert that small-scale farming is a universally applicable solution to the agricultural problem. This point of view is endorsed by the World Bank and United Nations, and receives backing from numerous other institutions and NGOs. The conceptual origin of all these studies, can be traced back to the neo-populist school of thought, championed by A.V. Chayanov, which posits that agricultural production serves the aim of consumption and relies solely on family labour. He stated that the goal of this production was to achieve a balance between the benefits of increased output and the drawbacks of more intense labour, which he referred to as 'labour-consumption' equilibrium. (Athreya, Kumar, Ramakumar, & Sarkar, 2017) argued that such household-based production was embedded in a larger theory of 'peasant economy', which is fundamentally separate from a capitalist economy. Chayanov argued that even in situations of bankruptcy, small-scale agricultural households will persist in production by increasing their work hours, selling their products at reduced prices, and managing to survive without generating any net surplus. The concept of intensification and self-exploitation played a crucial role in Chayanov's work. Chayanovian notion of homogenous peasantry was in direct contradiction to the Marxian understanding of the social order, which recognised the process of differentiation of the peasantry as an integral part of capitalist development. Utsa Patnaik contested the notion of a homogenous peasantry, proposed by Chayanov, and introduced the E-criterion to demonstrate the differentiation among peasants. The E-criterion is an important methodological instrument employed in this study. According to (Bernstein, 2009), Chayanov modified and adopted to support two prevailing themes in agricultural populism, viz. the 'technicist' or neo-populist trend and political populism. He further argues that Populist ideals are a reaction to the significant social disruptions that accompany the advancement of capitalism in contemporary society. The promotion of inherent values and the welfare of small producers, which symbolize the general population, consistently emerges as an ideology and movement that opposes the effects of capital accumulation.

Within the framework of neo-populism, (Byres T. , 2004) contends that specific measures are necessary in rural areas to address the harm inflicted on workers as capitalist transformation progresses. This is particularly important in situations where there is limited employment opportunities in the manufacturing industry, but a significant and expanding services sector, as well as a persistent large informal sector. The challenges posed by capitalist industrialization are dismissed by proposing that a viable alternative exists in rural areas.

According to the advocates of Neo-Populism, there are many advantages to small scale farming, which many other economists disagree to. The major disputed facts are the following. Firstly, the neo-populist argues that the benefit of small-scale farming is the inverse correlation between land productivity and farm size. They claim that small farms are more efficient than large farms, as they have a higher output per acre. This hypothesis also formed the foundation of the discussion in India concerning the relationship between farm size and production, as analysed in Farm Management Studies. While this discussion was intense in the 1960s, it has recently experienced a resurgence. Although, this proposition has been dismissed both practically and theoretically. According to (Byres T. , 2004)

“The staying power, viability and superiority of peasant agriculture vis-a-vis capitalist agriculture only by failing to acknowledge the existence and nature of capitalism. Methodologically, its crippling shortcoming is that it is a static approach in a dynamic context that does not and cannot capture relevant change and its contradiction. It is an eminently well-intentioned but reactionary

intervention since it seeks to recreate a past that has never existed and institute an agrarian structure that contains the seeds of its own destruction.”

Secondly, Neo-Populists contend that small-scale agriculture fosters enhanced social fairness and equity. The Chayanovian approach asserts that small-scale agriculture promotes social justice and equity. Many scholars dispute this view. (Athreya, Kumar, Ramakumar, & Sarkar, 2017) accurately highlight that this perspective fails to address the arduous labour and significant lack of access to enough consumption, education, and healthcare. It was asserted that peasant farms rely heavily on family labour, which mostly refers to the extensive use of unpaid labour by women and children inside a peasant household. The labour-intensive nature of this cultivation does not yield sufficient money, either in cash or in kind, to help in the family’s consumption requirements. Thirdly, supporters of small-scale farming claim that food production on small holdings ensure at least a basic minimum provisioning of food. Small-scale farming, then, is supported on the grounds that it provides food security in its four dimensions of availability, access, utilisation and stability. (Athreya, Kumar, Ramakumar, & Sarkar, 2017) again, disputed this view and argued that there are no such evidences which suggest that small farmer households are food secure. Lastly, it is asserted that solidarity networks of mutual support are essential components of this lifestyle. It is argued that this undifferentiated form of peasantry follows ecologically sustainable cultivation practices and preserve bio-diversity. In their understanding, small scale farming offers a viable alternative to the devastating effects of capitalism on ecology. In addition, solidarity networks of mutual assistance are claimed to be integral to this way of life. These peasants are projected as an organised force against the onslaught of global neo-liberal capitalism that seeks to endanger food sovereignty globally.

(Athreya, Kumar, Ramakumar, & Sarkar, 2017) argues that this morale dimension of agrarian populism is a defence of a threatened idealised way of life that involves anti-industrialism and anti-urbanism. While there may not be much ground for arguing that small-scale farming embodies the virtues claimed for it by its romantic advocates, it is important to recognise that any agrarian policy or perspective should reckon with the fact that small farmers account for a substantial proportion of rural population. Hence this requires a concrete policy support, to stay viable in the context of holistic assault on their livelihoods by neoliberal capitalist globalisation. Hence (Athreya, Kumar, Ramakumar, & Sarkar, 2017) takes the view that just as it is not necessary to romanticise small-scale farming, it is equally important not to abandon the small farmer.

### **Small Scale Farming: A Policy Perspective**

It is crucial to emphasize that small farms and small-scale farming are two distinct and separate ideas. The Marxist perspective on scale and differentiation diverges significantly from the conventional notions of land size and its physical characteristics. The Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO)<sup>ii</sup> of the United Nations recognized the year 2014 as the International Year of Family Farming. According to their definition, family farming is characterized as a method of organizing agricultural, forestry, fisheries, pastoral, and aquaculture production (FAO, 2013). These farms are managed and controlled by a family and primarily depend on the labour of family members, including both men and women. The family and the farm are interconnected, mutually influenced, and integrate economic, environmental, social, and cultural roles. The source of this information is the Food and Agriculture Organisation in the year 2013. (Graueb, et al., 2016) contended that family farms comprise around 98% of all farms worldwide, contribute to 53% of

global food production, and occupy 53% of global agricultural area. Corporate farming is restricted in South Asian countries, particularly India, resulting in a prevalence of family farming. The classification of small farms involves various factors, but the most commonly used method is based on farm-size. Small farmers in different countries are categorized based on the size of their land, however the specific threshold varies from one country to another. In the case of India, there is a classification system that divides farmers into five categories based on the size of their land. Farmers with less than 1 hectare of land are classified as marginal farmers, those with land between 1-2 hectares are classified as small farmers, those with land between 2-4 hectares are classified as semi-medium farmers, those with land between 4-10 hectares are classified as medium farmers, and those with more-than 10 hectares of land are classified as large farmers. Regarding India, the Ministry of Agriculture formulates policies in alignment with these classifications. Credit and insurance schemes are specifically aimed at small-scale farmers with landholdings of less than 2 hectares or 5 acres. However, there are alternative interpretations. For instance, (Sharma, 2012) states that the Indian government has established a threshold of 10 hectares to classify farmers with low income or limited resources, specifically for meeting obligations to the World Trade Organization (WTO). According to India's Supporting Table in Part IV of the Uruguay Round Schedule (WTO document G/AG/AGST/IND), individuals who own less than 10 hectares of land are classified as low income or resource poor. This description aligns with the bimodal definition provided by the High-Level Panel of Experts of the Food and Agriculture Organization (HLPE, 2013). This technique categorizes land distribution in the Agricultural Census into two separate groups, viz. small and large. Small farms are defined as those with land holding of less than 10 hectares. Additionally, since agriculture is within the jurisdiction of individual states in India, there are other land reform legislations that vary among different states of the country. In India, land is categorized based on soil quality, irrigation methods, areas suitable for plantation crops, estimated output value, revenue assessment, and other characteristics. (Athreya, Kumar, Ramakumar, & Sarkar, 2017) asserts that, the concept of a 'standard acre' has been employed within the framework of land reform laws. These standards differ among states. In Odisha, a standard acre is defined as either 1 acre of land that is consistently irrigated and can support three crops per year, or 4 acres of non-irrigated land. In Tripura, the standard acre can range from 1 acre of lowland (*nal or lunga*) to 3 acres of upland (*tilla*). Land ceilings vary throughout different countries, reflecting differing farming practices. Land reform legislation focuses on establishing the maximum amount of land that a person or family can own, which is separate from determining what qualifies as a small farm. Therefore, it is crucial to comprehend, that the policy concerning small scale farming in India mostly revolves around the landholding size, while disregarding other significant criteria.

### **Peasantry Under Capitalism: Outlook Of Marx and Engels**

This section will examine the Marxist perspective on the progression of capitalism in agriculture and its impact on small scale farmers. According to the Marxist perspective, the peasants under a capitalist system are fundamentally distinct from the peasantry in a pre-capitalist system. Capitalism, by revolutionizing the forces of production, increases the 'economic size' of the farm. Therefore, the individual labour performed by the peasantry is converted into collective labour. Within this particular framework, Marx, in his work *Capital*, Volume 3, highlighted

“Proprietorship of land parcels, by its very nature, excludes the development of social productive forces of labour, social forms of labour, social concentration of capital, large scale cattle raising, and the progressive application of science. ‘usury’ and the taxation system must impoverish it everywhere. The expenditure of capital in the price of the land withdraws this capital from cultivation. And infinite fragmentation of means of production and isolation of the producers themselves.” (Marx, 1954)

Lenin disagreed with Marx’s perspective and contended that cooperative societies, which consist of small peasants, have a limited impact on the elimination of the bourgeois tendency, and thereby, weaken its structures. Additionally, cooperative societies primarily benefit wealthy peasants and provide little to no assistance to impoverished peasants. In fact, these associations can even exploit hired labour. Marx’s perspective underwent changes as time passed. In the addressal of the Polish question, Marx and Engels write,

“The big agrarian countries, between the Baltic, and the black seas, can free themselves from patriarchal feudal barbarism, only by an agrarian revolution, which turns the peasant who are serfs or liable to compulsory labour into free land-owners, a revolution which would be similar to the French revolution of 1789 in the countryside.” (Engels, 1848)

The concept of a ‘worker-peasant’ alliance rose from this perspective, serving as a crucial solution to the agricultural issue. The “Narodniks”, believed that the ‘*mir*’<sup>iii</sup>, the traditional Russian communal system, was inherently socialist. They argued that Russian socialism could have been established by utilizing the ‘*mir*’ as a foundation, without the need for capitalist development as an intermediate stage. Initially, Marx and Engels understood this perspective, but they rejected it later. They recognized the premise that the ‘*mir*’ could serve as a means of socially transforming Russia without relying on a capitalist approach. However, in order to accomplish this, specific circumstances had to be met.

“The first condition necessary for this was an impulse from outside – a change in the economic system of western Europe, destruction of the capitalist system in those countries where it had first arisen.” (Engels F. , 1893)

The second condition was characterized by a ‘Popular Revolution’. According to (Trapeznikov, 1981), a successful popular revolution in Russia would result in the abolition of the landlord-monarchical system and the elimination of “private ownership of the instruments and means of production”. Despite the failure to meet these prerequisites, capitalism in Russia progressed swiftly. Engels wrote in similar situations,

“As to the commune, it is only possible so long as the differences of wealth among its members are but trifling. As soon as these differences become great, as soon as some of its members become debt-slaves of the rich members, it can no longer live. I am afraid that institution is doomed. But conversely, capitalism opens out new views and new hopes. Look at what it has done and doing in the West... There is no great historical evil without a compensating historical progress.” (Engels F. , 1893)

Within the extensive body of Marxist literature, the narrative of Indian growth after gaining independence holds a distinct fascination for scholars adhering to Marxist ideology. Many people believed that a thorough land reform was necessary to fully achieve the goals of the democratic revolution in the country. (Athreya, Kumar, Ramakumar, & Sarkar, 2017), contended that in order to make further progress in democracy, it is imperative to achieve a democratic revolution led by

the working class in collaboration with the peasantry, particularly the impoverished peasants and agricultural labourers who play a crucial role in rural society. This perspective anticipates the enduring existence of a substantial group of marginal and small farmers over an extended period of time. Therefore, it is crucial to implement public policies that empower small-scale farmers, with a specific emphasis on fostering the growth of their productive capabilities.

This approach of advocating for small scale agriculture differs significantly from the neo-populist argument that idealizes small scale farming, emphasizing the inverse correlation between farm size and productivity. (Patnaik U. , 1981) argues that there is no evidence of such a reverse correlation in the Indian setting, and no such argument exists that small farms are run more efficiently than large farms. The decades of the green revolution provide evidence that, despite advancements in productive forces, the idea of this inverse relationship has proven to be unsuccessful.

Indian agricultural policy has officially acknowledged the importance of small-scale farming in the country's history. Also, since the inception of the new agricultural strategy, there has been governmental acknowledgment of the dominance of small-scale farming in India. Several policy measures are designed to specifically target the challenges faced by marginal and small farmers. An illustrative example of this is the creation of the "Small Farmers Development Agency" (SDF) and the "Scheme for Marginal Farmers and Agricultural Labourers" (MFAL) in 1971. In an effort to suppress the growing unrest among peasants during the late 1960s and early 1970s, certain public policies were implemented as part of the 'green revolution'. These policies, although primarily focused on supporting the powerful in a system of land monopoly, also acknowledged, at least in theory, the concerns of small farmers. This was particularly accurate throughout the extensive period of social and development banking that occurred from the 1970s to the 1980s. The onset of the 1990s, marked by the rapid implementation of neoliberal reforms, signalled the advent of a distinct and transformative regime.

### **Lenin's Addressal of Peasant Differentiation**

Lenin, drawing inspiration from the ideas of Marx and Engels, actively confronted the Narodniks in a historical struggle. He acknowledged that while the basis of Narodnik ideology was considered 'progressive' and had a basis in historical reality and legitimacy, but there was a caveat.

"The mistake all the Narodniks make is that by confining themselves to the narrow outlook of the small husbandman, they fail to perceive the bourgeois nature of the social relations into which the peasant enters on coming out of the fetters of serfdom. They convert the "labour principle" of petty-bourgeois agriculture and "equalization" which are their slogans for breaking up the feudal latifundia, into something absolute, self-sufficing, into something implying a special, non-bourgeois order." (Lenin, 1977)

Essentially, the Narodniks failed to consider the basic shift in economic principles that occurs within the peasantry under capitalism. As Capitalism progresses, the peasantry experiences significant variations in their material circumstances. Lenin additionally referenced Marx's theory and asserted,

"One of the major results of the capitalist mode of production is that, on the one hand, it transforms agriculture from a mere empirical and mechanical self-perpetuating process employed by the least

developed parts of society into the conscious scientific application of agronomy, in so far as this is at all feasible under conditions of private property; that it divorces landed property from the relations of dominion and servitude, on the one hand, and, on the other, totally separates land as an instrument of production from landed property and landowner. The rationalising of agriculture, on the one hand, which makes it for the first time capable of operating on a social scale, and the reduction ad absurdum of property in land, on the other, are the great achievements of capitalist mode of production. Like all its historically advances, it also attained these by first completely impoverishing the direct producers.” (Lenin V. , 1972)

Lenin subsequently penned, “In agriculture, as in industry, capitalism transforms the process of production only at the price of “martyrdom of the producer”. Under capitalism, the small holding system, which is the normal form of small-scale production, degenerates, collapses and perishes.” (Lenin V. , 1972)

It is important to recognize that this remark is valid in the overall trajectory of capitalism over a long period of time, but not necessarily in its immediate impact. (Athreya, Kumar, Ramakumar, & Sarkar, 2017) assert that the decrease and ultimate end of small-scale farming in modern capitalism, although an ongoing and unavoidable component of history, is also influenced and opposed by several factors. Small industrialists persist, even in the context of neoliberal capitalism, just as small peasants do, particularly in agrarian nations that have been severely impacted by centuries of colonial domination.

### **Kautsky’s Critique of Neo-Populism**

In his groundbreaking essay, ‘The Agrarian Question’, Karl Kautsky, another influential academic, tackled the dispute between small- and large-scale farming, opposing the perspective of neo-populists. He contended that while individual large farms require less livestock, labour, and land compared to small farms of the same type, they still utilize more resources overall. This is because large farms are able to more effectively exploit the advantages of labour specialization through the division of tasks. Only farms of significant size have the capacity to carry out the necessary adjustments and integration of tools and equipment for specific activities, which ultimately make modern farms more advanced than those in the pre-capitalist era. This principle also holds true for different breeds of animals.

“The dwarf-holder’s cow is a dairy animal, a draught animal and a breeding stock; there is no question of choosing a specific breed, or of adapting the stock and feed to specific requirements. Similarly, dwarf-holder cannot delegate the various tasks on the farm to different individuals.” (Kautsky, 1988)

The capacity of the large farm to engage in this form of specialization bestows numerous benefits. The extensive agricultural operation can allocate jobs specifically to suit particular expertise or attention, as well as those that primarily need physical effort. The first category can be assigned to workers who demonstrate intelligence or diligence and have the ability to enhance their expertise and knowledge by fully or primarily focusing on a certain task. Due to the division of labour and the increased scale of the farm, individuals will spend more time on each task, hence reducing the time and effort wasted on constantly switching between activities and work areas. Ultimately, the large-scale farmer can also benefit from the advantages of cooperation, which involves the organized collaboration of numerous individuals working towards a shared goal (Kautsky, 1988).

Despite this perspective, Kautsky acknowledged that in the medium-term, large-scale farming will not be able to eliminate small farmers completely due to the presence of numerous economic barriers, institutions, and mechanisms. He contended that since the primary goal of mechanizing farms is to reduce labour costs rather than labour itself, the level of mechanization in agriculture will always be lower than that in industry. He argues,

“Whilst industry can use its machinery every day, most machines in agriculture are only required for a short period each year. Other things being equal, the labour-saving capacity of machinery is therefore much greater in industry. Given two machines, each of which can replace ten workers per day, of which one is used for ten days per year, and the other for 300, one will save 100 days of labour a year, and the other 3000.” (Kautsky, 1988)

Therefore, the more the wages are reduced, the greater the challenge of implementing machinery becomes. Kautsky also recognized that the significant disparities between agriculture and industry may perhaps decrease in the long term, but not in the immediate future. Therefore, a farm that is larger in size does not necessarily mean it is superior. He contended that, under typical conditions, larger enterprises consistently outperform smaller ones in the industry. Undoubtedly, any enterprise in the industry has its inherent limitations which, if exceeded, would jeopardize its profitability. Every firm is constrained by the scope of the market, the magnitude of the available capital, the quantity of labour force accessible, the availability of raw materials, and the boundaries of technology. Nevertheless, within certain boundaries, the larger enterprise surpasses the smaller one. In the field of agriculture, this is neither universally nor consistently true. Within the realm of industry, the expansion of a business signifies a growth in the concentration of productive resources, resulting in various benefits such as time and cost savings, efficient use of materials, and improved oversight. In agriculture, when the enterprise expands, the same cultivation methods are used over a larger area. This leads to an increase in material losses, higher expenses for labour and production, and longer delays in transporting labour and materials. Agriculture is particularly important because many of its inputs, such as fertilizer, hay, straw, corn, and potatoes, have a low value-to-volume ratio. On top of that, agricultural technologies are rather basic compared to those used in other industries. Supervising individual workers becomes more challenging as the estate size increases, which is a significant factor to consider within the pay system. However, Kautsky remained unconvinced that any of these obstacles provided any benefits to the arguments supporting the dominance of small farms over large farms. The process of transitioning to an agrarian society is influenced by various elements, such as the speed of technology advancements and the conditions related to agriculture and ecology. According to him, the significant benefits of the vast farm are far more important than the drawbacks of long distance, but this only applies to a specific region. Once a certain threshold is reached, the benefits of having a larger farm are far outweighed by the drawbacks of increased distance, and expanding the land size any further would diminish the profitability of the land. Determining the exact moment when this stage will be reached is inherently unattainable. The variation is dependent on the techniques employed, the kind of soil, and the method of cultivation. Several causes are currently causing an upward shift in the point, including the implementation of steam and electricity as sources of energy, as well as the use of light trains. Others exert force in the other direction. The higher the animal and labour density per unit of land, the greater the number of loads that need to be transported. This includes machinery, heavy tools, fertilizers, and the harvest itself. As a result, the impact of longer distances becomes more apparent. Typically, the profitability of a farm decreases as it becomes larger, especially when it involves more extensive cultivation and more investments in the soil. However,

advancements in technology can occasionally defy this principle. It is crucial to highlight that both Lenin and Kautsky's arguments against small farming focused on the issue of self-exploitation among the peasantry. Small scale farming perseveres despite the relentless advance of capitalism. According to Kautsky, small farms possess two significant advantages to counter the dominance of large farms. First, the increased diligence and meticulousness of the farmers, who, unlike wage-labourers, work for their own benefit. Second, the small independent peasant exhibits a level of frugality that surpasses even that of the agricultural labourer. Not only do the small peasants subject themselves to this laborious work, their families are also not exempted from it. Given the close connection between managing the household and the land in agriculture, children have to oblige their families by offering their labour. Furthermore, child labour within context of domestic industry, viz. when children are employed on their own family's small agricultural property, is even more harmful than child labour for external employers.

Women and children are the primary victims of these occurrences. As agriculture becomes more scientific and the competition intensifies between rational and traditional small-scale farming, the small farms are compelled to increase their use of child labour and hinder the children's access to education (Athreya, Kumar, Ramakumar, & Sarkar, 2017). Only someone with a strong and stubborn admiration for owning tiny plots of land would be able to appreciate the benefits that come from reducing small farmers to the status of mere labourers, whose lives are solely dedicated to work, with minimal time for rest and meals. Engaging in a practice of increasing working hours is always accompanied by a lack of technological progress. The former is produced by the latter, and vice versa. An organization that lacks the ability to outperform its competitors through technological advancements is compelled to place even higher expectations on its employees. Conversely, a business where employees can be pushed to their maximum capabilities is less vulnerable to the requirement for technical advancements compared to a business where employees set limitations on their efforts. Extending working hours is a highly effective hindrance to technological advancement. The heightened diligence exhibited by peasants in their labour is less detrimental to their well-being compared to their toil and excessive thriftiness. Care is a significant factor in agricultural productivity, surpassing its importance in industries, for instance. Self-employed workers will undoubtedly demonstrate a higher level of diligence compared to employees who receive wages. Although this may not be advantageous in all forms of huge enterprises, it surely is in context of large-scale capitalist farming (Athreya, Kumar, Ramakumar, & Sarkar, 2017). However, it is important to emphasize that this should not be exaggerated. The additional weapons in the limited farm's arsenal - excessive labour, inadequate nutrition, and concomitant lack of knowledge - counterbalance the impacts of increased attention. As the duration of work increases, the quality of diet decreases, and the amount of time for education decreases, resulting in a decrease in the level of care put into work. (Athreya, Kumar, Ramakumar, & Sarkar, 2017) poses the question that what is the purpose of putting in significant effort to provide proper care if there is insufficient time to clean the stall and tend to the livestock. Additionally, the draft animals, who are frequently limited to a dairy cow, are also excessively burdened and inadequately nourished. The excessive workload endured by small independent farmers and their families should not be considered as a benefit of small-scale farming, even when solely considering economic factors and disregarding ethical or other considerations. Lenin concurred with Kautsky's perspective that the dominant and primary trajectory of capitalism involves the replacement of small-scale output with large-scale production in both the industrial and agricultural sectors. However, it is important to understand that this process should not be only

interpreted as an act of immediate seizure of property. This elimination process also includes the gradual and prolonged degradation of the farming circumstances for small-scale farmers, which persisted for years or even decades. This decline is evident through the excessive workload or inadequate nourishment of small-scale farmers, the growing burden of debt, the deterioration of livestock feed and overall conditions, the degradation of farming and fertilization practices, the stagnation of technological advancements, and other related factors. Under capitalism, small-scale agricultural production is inevitably destined for extinction and will be subjected to severe oppression and suppression. Small-scale production in agriculture, due to its reliance on enormous capital and its lack of advancement compared to large-scale production, can only survive with drastically decreased consumption and strenuous effort. Capitalism universally results in the scattering and squandering of human labour, the most detrimental types of reliance on the worker, depletion of the vitality of the agricultural household, livestock, and farmland. He contended that small-scale industry is only feasible with a limited and rudimentary framework of production and society (Lenin, 1907).

## CONCLUSION

The discussion on social classes can be broadly classified into two schools. The Neo-Populist, advocated by A.V. Chayanov, argued for the homogenous nature of peasantry and how the positive correlation between small farming and output, efficiency, and productivity are essential questions in addressing the broader ‘agrarian question.’ This was contrary to Lenin’s view, that the development of capitalism in the Russian countryside was differentiating the peasantry into socio-economic classes. Lenin’s notion was heavily influenced by Marx and Engel’s outlook on capitalism, despite having some disagreement on the role of the peasantry in achieving a ‘popular revolution.’ In this broader debate on the role of peasantry in the Russian economy, both Lenin and Karl Kautsky, disagreed with the “Chayanovian” notion of homogenous peasantry. These historical debates are essential, in the context of Indian agriculture because structures of class and caste are important social institutions that impact the farm economy.

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## End-Notes

1. The Narodniks were a group in the 19th-century Russian populist movement that sought to incite a peasant-led social revolution. Believing that Russia could bypass capitalism and build socialism based on agrarian communalism, they idealized the *mir* (peasant commune) as the foundation of a future socialist society. Narodniks attempted to “go to the people” by living among and educating the peasants, but their efforts largely failed due to peasant suspicion and resistance. Although unsuccessful, the Narodniks influenced later revolutionary movements, including the Socialist Revolutionaries, and their ideas contributed to the broader discourse on Russia’s path to socialism.
2. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations played a pivotal role in resolving global food security difficulties in 2010, amidst growing concerns regarding hunger and malnutrition. The primary objectives of the FAO are to advocate for the adoption of sustainable agricultural practices, enhance food production systems, and provide assistance for rural development in order to mitigate the impacts of climate change and economic instability. In that particular year, the FAO placed significant emphasis on the significance of smallholder farmers in ensuring global food security. Additionally, they urged for enhanced international collaboration to successfully accomplish the Millennium Development Goal of reducing the number of undernourished individuals by 50% by the year 2015. The group persisted in offering member governments technical aid, data, and policy advice.

3. The mir was a customary agrarian commune in pre-revolutionary Russia, characterized by communal ownership of land and periodic redistribution among houses in the hamlet. The community operated autonomously, with village assemblies (referred to as skhod) responsible for determining land distribution, taxation, and other concerns pertaining to the community as a whole. The mir played a crucial role in the rural community, cultivating a sense of communal obligation and reciprocal assistance among peasants.

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