

## **HISTORICAL SKETCH OF PEASANT ACTIVISM: TRACING EMANCIPATORY POLITICAL STRATEGIES OF PEASANT ACTIVISTS OF SINDH**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Peasant activism in Sindh is very diverse and has its own typical history. Temporally, it has been focused on contextual issues that demand more than just land reforms. Peasant activists have, over the years, pursued roughly articulated, expedient and highly diverse agendas that are enacted by the mix of civil society activists, NGOs and ethnic peasant activists. In this article, which is the result of ethnographic study and the analysis of secondary ethnographic and historical data, effort has been made to trace the formation of peasantivist agendas and strategies in Sindh, particularly tracing it from the peasant struggle of Shah Inayat in 17<sup>th</sup> century. The introduction of exploitative *Batai* system during British rule, the consequent institutionalization of sharecropping, establishment of Hari Committee in 1930s, the launching of *Batai* Tehreek and Elati Tehreek have been traced in relation to shifting peasantivist agendas. Failure of peasant activists to bring about substantive land reforms and the recent process of NGO-ising of peasant activism, have been analyzed vis-à-vis historical past.

**KEYWORDS:** Peasant Activism, Peasant Movements, N.G.Os

### **INTRODUCTION**

In this study the genesis of exploitation in peasant communities of Sindh has been elaborated, and the historical analysis of some of the important peasant struggles, rebels, and movements have been done to understand where peasants and peasant activist in Sindh stands now. The historical analysis of peasant activism in Sindh reveals that bringing about land reforms to equally redistribute land has been the ideal goal of peasant activists but it has not been there the unilateral demand or as a kind of monolithic agenda, nor it has been actively pursued as a clearly defined one-issue program by peasant activists. For them, land reforms have meant many things. Hence, their issues did not merely revolve around land reforms to redistribute land, but, in fact, have shifted in focus over the year, and attended to scores of issues such as Tenancy laws, re-allotment of land and the rights of permanent sharecroppers. Land reforming agenda is often appended with other related issues such as environmental issues, justifiable distribution of Indus water, right of indigenous communities, rights of fishermen, ecology of Delta, building of dam, establishment of peasant cooperatives, corporate farming, dairy farming, and issues of pastoral migratory communities etc. These issues have often been intermeshed with the issues of Sindh in general and the issues of Sindhi ethnic group in particular.

Peasant movement in Sindh has got transformed into a kind multidimensional activism having multiple loci, and in a kind of graduated and sustained struggle launched by peasant activists, social activists, rural social workers, Sindhi civil society activists, Sindhi ethno-nationalists, advocacy-based NGOs, human rights organizations, leftist and the Marxist activists. It is multi-local, multi-issued, yet all of such issues bear implicit or explicit links with the life of actual

sharecroppers and peasants. Hence, in this study the articulation of peasant issues by peasant activists since the peasant movement of Shah Inayat Shaheed in 17<sup>th</sup> century, but particularly focusing on the peasant activism and movements launched during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, has been briefly explained. In this study, most of the focus has been on activism of Hari<sup>1</sup> Committee, *Batai* Tehreek, Elati Tehreek, Land reforming agendas, and shifting of peasant issues and agendas due to the NGO-ising process.

## METHODOLOGY

Before drawing parallels between the existing peasant activism in Sindh and the peasant activism in general, thorough content analysis of the local literature on peasant movements in Sindh, particularly the historical analysis of the origin of sharecropping and exploitative *Batai* system had been done. Hence, it's a kind of hermeneutical enquiry, a historical content analysis, as well as, a kind of 'archeological' digging in Foucauldian sense (Foucault M. , 2005, p. xii) into the layers of Peasant struggles to look for generic yet previously hidden, to outline the critical and social constructionist nature of peasant activism in Sindh. It is also a kind of explanatory note on the nature of systemic or structured exploitation of sharecroppers through the introduction and sustenance of *Batai* system and bonded labour.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Theoretical and ethnographic analysis of peasant cultures in Sindh and Gujarat done by Jan Breman (1985, 2008, 2010, and 2014) has been extensively employed here to understand the nature of exploitation in peasant-landlord relationships. Jürgen Habermas' critique of functionalism through his elaboration of the model of 'life-world and system' (1987) and (1984), T.J. Byres' (2005) historical perspective on sharecropping, the analysis of the nature of conflicts and resolution mechanism in sharecropping and unpaid labour in Sindh done by Hussain et al (2013) have guided much of the analysis in this paper. Yet the bulk of analytic framework has been evolved through analytic borrowing from and the dependence on works of populist activists and intellectuals of Sindh, such as G.M. Sayed (2011), Qazi Faiz Muhammad (2008), Masood Khadarposh (2002), Hussain Badshah (2011), and Qazi Faiz Muhammad's description of 'Hari Committee' ('Peasant Committee' of Sindh) and 'Ellati Tehreek' (Movement for re-allotment of Land).

Much of development discourse on peasant communities of lower Sindh and their peasantist and ethnic resistances, have also been analyzed in relation to theoretical literature of and about NGOs, and the Sindhi civil society thinkers. Some reports and case-studies written and published by INGOs and local NGOs (Arif, 2008; Bhandar Hari Sangat; Oxfam GB, 2012; Ercelawn & Nauman, 2001; Maliha, Razzaq, & Shazreh, 2004) have also been resorted to gather data, and generate the critique of peasant activism and its related or contradicting political agents in rural Sindh.

Hence, as it is evident from the above description of the literature review, historical analysis has been done not merely for presenting the history as it was perceived by peasant activists or various writers of history, but for looking into hidden patterns, and the meanings, through 'archeological' digging, in Foucauldian sense (Foucault M. , 2005, p. xii), to make sense of peasant activism in Sindh. The organic relationship that links the actual existing peasants with their 'archeological past', 'the process in which both identities and the past are reconstructed in line with changing in places', and the issues of existing peasants as these are expressed and asserted by peasant communities. They hold localized ideology, experience folk social reality, create localized boundaries, and connect to 'other' communities selectively.

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<sup>1</sup> Hari is the Sindhi generic term which literally means 'peasant'.

All this localization and reconstruction of history and place from their archeological past, is presently going on within all such indigenous and ethnic peasant communities of lower Sindh. To make sense of this localization, place-based reality, and the renewal of history-making skills, historical analysis of the peasant activism in Sindh has been done by tracing it to the times when ethnic discrimination, socio-economic exploitation and political domination became explicit and started structuring in Sindh.

### **ORIGIN OF *BATAI*: BEGINNING OF EXPLOITATION IN SHARECROPPING IN SINDH**

Before delving upon the existing structure and functioning of peasant activists of Sindh in further detail, it would be analytically useful to keep in perspective the history of peasant movements/activism in Sindh from the times when most of the existing issues, as perceived by local peasants, related to sharecroppers and peasants raised their 'ugly' face, that is, from the times of the introduction of the modern form of *Batai* system and resultant sharecropping in South Asia. Turning of owner cultivators, small land-owning peasants into sharecroppers is interpreted by peasant activists of Sindh, as not only economically degrading, but also as socially and emotionally alienating. Peasant's exploitation at the hands of landlords, its lack of interest in hard work over land and cropping is believed to be the direct consequence of *Batai*<sup>2</sup> system (Khadarposh, 2002, p. 56). Promulgation of *Batai* system during British rule gave birth to the institution of modern or rational form of sharecropping or share-tenancy. In fact, the system of *Batai* (sharing produce with the Zamindar/state's official as a kind of government tax) prevailed in Sindh as early as sixteenth century during Mughal era that eventually, culminated into the full-blown formal and legally approved institution of share-tenancy or sharecropping in nineteenth century during British rule. (Ahmed, 1984). *Batai* system introduced by the British eventually eliminated the much idealized village communes or village cooperatives that used to prevail throughout South Asia. The self-sufficiency of the village, panchayat system, and the most important of all, the ownership of the lands by self-cultivating peasants, got gradually eliminated during the British rule (Ahmed F. , 1984; Badshah, 2011; Badsha, 2005).

Introduction of formal and legally approved sharecropping and *Batai* system dramatically changed the socio-economics of peasant culture. In earlier times, tribal chiefs and kinship leaders also existed in Sindh, but they used to settle conflicts through mutual dialogue and debate. In Mughal era, under Ain-i-Akbari, peasants had property rights over their tilled lands; landlords were just entitled only to receive fair share of the produce (Khadarposh, 2002, p. 68) under customary law to redistribute the received share among the artisans, mason, potter, blacksmith, drummer and the religious teacher. Hence, the share would be deducted by the landlord, not for his personal use, but for the social welfare activities of the whole village community. In Sindh, however, landlords were gradually pampered by Mughal-appointed rulers of Sindh and Kalhora rulers in 17th century AD, against whom Shah Inayat Shaheed, the earliest socialist Sufi, launched a peasant movement for the first time in Sindh. (Soomro, 2012; Badshah, 2011; Mahar, 2011; G.M.Sayed, 2011) It was the first reaction by indigenous Sindhi peasants, from below, against the coercion of state-imposed rational system. It was the first peasant struggle that set up an example for the peasant activists that followed. Shah Inayat's slogan 'Jo Kharey, So Khaey', (Tiller of the land deserves the Produce) became the foundation of the agendas of peasant activists irrespective of their caste, race or tribal affiliations.

Over the years, since the times of Mughals, that dialectical interplay, in Habermasian sense, of "life-world" of peasant communities and the traditional "system" based on customary laws, has been gradually "distorted"

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<sup>2</sup> Literally, '*Batai*' means 'distribution of the crop-produce between sharecropper and landlord'.

(Habermas, TCA, 1987; Habermas, TCA 1, 1984), eventually turning independent peasants into dependent sharecroppers and communally selected landlords into official and then private owners of the peasant's land. That huge and historical distortion was introduced by the external agent, Lord Cornwallis, who was appointed by the colonial power in 1793. (Khadarposh, 2002, pp. 68,69).

### **FROM *BATAI* SYSTEM TO JAGEERDARI SYSTEM**

The permanent settlement of Lord Cornwallis in 1793 converted the original cultivators into tenants and rent collectors into *zamindars*. After the British occupation of Sindh around the middle of the nineteenth century, the *hari* was downgraded from the status of cultivator to that of sharecropper when, the *waderas*, traditional headman, and the village chieftains were given property rights over the land under his jurisdiction...From then on, land, with the *haris* on it, became a saleable commodity. New areas could be purchased from the state and settled with local or migrant populations. (Maliha, Razzaq, & Shazreh, 2004, p. 4)

Hence, conferring of authority by the East India Company to local landlords, feudals and Sardars, to collect land revenue from peasants under their Jageers<sup>3</sup>, buttressed by the formal-rational graft of alien English system of administration, courts and the police, sowed the seeds of the structural and systemic exploitation of peasants. In fact, although *Batai* system (sharing produce with the government) existed throughout India, particularly in Sindh and Punjab before the British colonized the sub-continent, the sort of exploitative *Batai* system (i.e. sharing of produce with the landlord or jageerdar) and sharecropping, however, grew during British rule throughout India under 'Jageer' system (T.J.Byres, 2005, p. 24). British sponsored Jageerdari system thus dispossessed those who were previously indigenous owners of the land that were redefined as share-sharecroppers under new and formal-rational tenancy laws. Economically weakened status of the self-cultivating peasant-turned-sharecroppers further impeded them, in several subsequent decades, from securing their human rights, land rights, self-sufficiency, and individual and familial autonomy (Khadarposh, 2002, p. 73).

Right from the beginning of the British rule, peasant communities and indigenous tribes were against colonial policies of legalizing land encroachments (Calcutta Review, 1964, p. 219). The British, instead of abolishing feudalism, erected its colonial imperialism on it, to suppress any kind of mass movements and rebellions by peasants and indigenous peoples, by transforming the village headmen and tribal chiefs into officially authorized Jageerdars. Thus, they introduced Jagirdari system and then a new kind of Zamindari system that paved the way for systemic and historical alienation, suppression and exploitation of peasant and indigenous communities. (Chatterjee, 2001; Hyden & Stoecker, 2005; O.P.Ralhan, 2002; Khadarposh, 2002).

### **REVOLTS OF INDIGENOUS PEASANT COMMUNITIES AGAINST THE BRITISH**

The revolts and resistances by peasant and indigenous communities, and ethnic minorities antedated the colonization of the South Asia by the British. Hence, the exploitative *Batai* system, introduction of Jageerdari system and the encroachments over the indigenous lands were not by any means accepted passively by the local communities. The resistances and indigenous struggles rather asserted itself more vigorously under the British rule (Guha, 1982; Guha,

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<sup>3</sup> Jageer' literally means 'feudal estate' or the land allotted by the British to local tribal chiefs or to those who rendered services to the British.

1997). Dispossession of peasants by the British spawned several peasant movements, struggles and mini wars by indigenous peasant tribes throughout South Asia. Some of the prominent revolts that also involved, directly or indirectly, lower caste marginalized peasants of the sub-continent and to the issues related to the right of peasants and indigenous communities of the subcontinent were, Great Kuki Invasion of 1860s, Gond rebellion, begun by Ramji Gond in Adilabad (1860), Koli revolt (1859, Bhopalpatnam Struggle (1795, Bheel rebellion (1822–1857), Santhal Revolt (1885–1886), Maria rebellion (1842–63), Bheel rebellion, begun by Tantya Tope in Banswara (1858), First Freedom Struggle (1856–57), and Rani rebellion (1878–82) (Tribal Protests and Rebelions, 3013; Sharma, p. 32; A.R.Desai, 1979). In lower Sindh, the war fought by Rooplo Kolhi and Sodha Rajputs of Parkar against the British during 1850s, and the Hurr resistance against the British, particularly the resistance of Hurr in Mokhi forest reservoir in Sanghar district were essentially peasant struggles to safeguard their customary rights over their lands, grazing fields and the ecological capital.

The British was so much suspicious and felt threatened by the indigenous and peasant communities that it even attempted to exterminate problematic indigenous communities through the generation of deliberate epidemics, drinking habits and the use of opium<sup>4</sup> to weaken, suppress or eliminate them (Cavalli-Sforza & Cavalli-Sforza, 1995). The displaced and disenfranchised indigenous communities, resultantly, became dependent on landlords who, to maximize their profits, eventually trapped them in debt bondage<sup>5, 6</sup> (Barik, 2006; Sameeksha Trust, 1974). Despite deliberate efforts by the British to crush the indigenous peasant communities, aboriginals and peasants kept revolting against them and against feudal lords and landlords appointed by the British, throughout British rule.

"... The Santhal insurrection in 1855–56 was a consequence of the establishment of the permanent Zamindari Settlement introduced by the British in 1793 as a result of which the Santhals had been dispossessed of the land that they had been cultivating for centuries. Zamindars, moneylenders, traders and government officials exploited them ruthlessly. The consequence was a violent revolt by the Santhals which could only be suppressed by the army ..." (S.Judge, 1992)

Most of the revolts, however, were brutally crushed by the British<sup>7</sup> (Tata Institute of Social Sciences, 1956), leading to mass internal migration of indigenous people throughout South Asia, including Koli (Coolie)<sup>8</sup> tribe (Maxham, 2003). Indigenous people and peasant communities not only struggled for their local rights over the land but also rebelled for the cause of independence of India from the British. But, due to their localized nature and tribal nature,

<sup>4</sup>"... Contact with whites, and the British in particular, has virtually destroyed them. Illness, alcohol, and the will of the colonials all played their part; the British governor of the time mentions in his diary that he received instructions to destroy them with alcohol and opium. He succeeded completely with one group. The others reacted violently ..." (Cavalli-Sforza & Cavalli-Sforza, 1995)

<sup>5</sup>"... As usually the zamindars were the moneylenders, they could pressurize the tenants to concede to high rent ..." (Barik, 2006)

<sup>6</sup>"... The Adivasis spend their life-times working for the landlord-moneylenders and, in some cases, even their children are forced to work for considerable parts of their lives to pay off debts ..." (Sameeksha Trust, 1974)

<sup>7</sup>"... Revolts rose with unfailing regularity and were suppressed with treachery, brute force, tact, cooption and some reforms ..." (Tata Institute of Social Sciences, 1956)

<sup>8</sup>"... many of the labourers came from Chota Nagpur District ... home to the Adivasis, the most popular workers with the planters – the '1st class jungley.' As one of the planters, David Crole, observed: 'planters, in a rough and ready way, to judge the worth of a coolie by the darkness of the skin.' In the last two decades of the nineteenth century 350,000 coolies went from Chota Nagpur to Assam ..." (Maxham, 2003)

rebellion remains mere rebellions and could not affect the ever dominating imperialism.

### **SITUATIONAL CAUSES OF PEASANT MOVEMENTS IN SINDH DURING BRITISH RULE**

When rebellions and physical struggles did not work, the leaders of the subcontinent adopted the western rational and democratic means of securing their rights. Peasants of Sindh, being suppressed and exploited had been weakened and demoralized to the extent that they could hardly struggle on their own without some sort of patronage provided to them from other classes. The Sindhi peasant, in fact, turned out to be the worst victim of the administrative and agrarian reforms introduced by the British. The rift between the common peasants and their so called feudal lords got further widened during movement for independence after the independence of Pakistan. The nature and modes of conflict, resistance and exploitation in rural Sindh that culminated in the exploitative and suppressive colonial graft of *landlord-police-patwari* system and institutionalized the institution of Partharidar<sup>9</sup> Wadero (Hussain, Mohyuddin, & Mahesar, 2013; Hussain, Mohyuddin, & Ahmed, 2013), in fact, started taking current shape when tribal chiefs and influential yes-men were appointed as revenue collectors (landlords) by the East India Company. Such authorized 'landlords', which literally meant 'officers' or 'managers', as defined by East India Company (1813), gradually became virtual owners of the lands under their Jageers. (Khadarposh, 2002, p. 68; Badsha, 2005).

The landlords' authority was informally accepted and recognized by the villagers and peasants and they were subsequently entitled as Waderas (headmen of the village or area). Waderaism prevailed in Sindh, despite the annulment of magisterial powers in 1940s that were conferred upon Waderas. Over the years Jageerdari system also transformed itself and developed into a more refined exploitative form that can be labeled as capitalist neo-feudalism. It became so much strong that despite the nullification of Jageerdari system both in India and Pakistan, it exists in as formidable form as it was before, though it has adapted and modified its form a bit.

The strength and existence of feudal system, however, can be evidenced in Sindh from the treatment that pro-peasant Chief Minister received in Sindh. Allah Bux, the pro-people and pro-peasant Premier of Sindh played instrumental role in the annulment of magisterial powers of the Waderas. Secular and liberal policies of Allah Bux were disliked by feudal politicians and Sindhi nationalists of that time. Abdullah Haroon, Ayub Khuro and the Sindhi nationalist leader G.M Sayed, to name a few, then started playing religious communal politics from the platform of Muslim League to divert the attention of the masses from the real issues and to bring down Allah Bux government. G.M. Sayed even went to the extent to proclaim "on the floor of the Assembly that the Hindus shall be driven out of Sindh like the Jews from Germany" (Malkani, 1997, pp. 94,95). Allah Bux, during Quit India movement, eventually, renounced all titles conferred upon him by the British and joined the movement that led to the dismissal of his government. The British, feudal, and ethnic-religious enmity at home, at last, resulted in his day-light murder (Malkani, 1997, p. 97). Murder of pro-peasant leader of the stature and caliber of Allah Bux is the proof that hegemonic forces join hands to destroy the one who may wish to bring about fundamental structural changes in the lop-sided social system.

"Allah Bux Soomro was a staunch opponent of Pakistan. Shortly before he was killed prior to Partition, he is reported to have said to G. M. Sayed, a separatist Sindhi nationalist who had once supported Pakistan: "You will get to

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<sup>9</sup> 'Pathari' is the Sinhi term which means the 'safe haven' or the hiding place and protection provided by the feudal lord or the big landlord or the tribal warrior to the bandits, and criminals, in exchange of share in the theft or looted material, and in exchange of crime committed on their at their behest.

know that our difficulties will begin after Pakistan has come into being. . . . At present the Hindu trader and money lender's plunder is worrying you but later you will have to face the Punjabi bureaucracy and soldiery and the mind of UP. Soomro then emphasized: [A]fter the creation of this aberration (Pakistan) you will have to struggle to fight its concomitant evils." (Khan, 2002, p. 217)

During the struggle for Independence of the India from the British, the Congress party incorporated land reforms into its manifestoes and delivered it after getting independence. All India Muslim leagues, which was predominated by Muslim feudal politicians, right from the beginning, however, offered little to peasants that were going to be the citizens of the newly formed Muslim country. Seeing hope for emancipation of peasants, most the peasant activists, including Muslims, took sides with Congress. Peasant activists of Sindh were, in fact, secular and socialist in their political outlook, and did not like religious communal politics.

The British rule and its sophisticated formal rational policies transformed the nature of resistances and politics in the sub-continent. The new type of politics that started off during 1920s and 1930s, involved holding large public gathering, political campaigns, the culture of protests and sit-ins. That democratic politicization also manifested itself in the indigenous innovation by Gandhi to resist through non-violent means, prevailed in the emerging trans-tribal, and trans-ethnic politics of the sub-continent. Peasant movements became political and calculated rather than martial and anarchic in nature. 'Freedom of speech and thought' became the touchstone and the political departing point for all kinds of social and political movements. Such a kind of political milieu gave birth to political associations and organizations the like of which still exists today. It was in the backdrop of that socio-politically changed and charged political environment that the lower middle classes and peasant-proprietors, together with some well-educated educationists and progressive-minded bureaucrats of Sindh also formed their association to safeguard the rights of peasants and laborers.

## **HARI COMMITTEE: ITS FORMATION AND DISSOLUTION**

Chronologically peasant movement in Sindh in the last century can be roughly classified into six periods.

- Establishment of *Hari* Committee in 1930 AD
- Era of *Batai* Tehreek and *Elati* Tehreek (1940 to 1970)
- Era of dormancy (1970 to 1977 A.D)
- Era of Reformation (1977 to 1990 A.D)
- Decade of legal and constitutional complications(1990 to 2000)
- Era of revitalization and engagement with development agencies (2000 to till now)

The prominent Sindhi leaders like Jamshed Mehta, Jethmal Pursaram, Gokhle, G.M. Sayed, Shaikh Abdul Majeed Sindhi, Comerade Abdul Qadir and others established Hari Committee in 1930 A.D with the purpose to bring about land reforms in Sindh so that lands brought about under agriculture due to the digging of canals after the building of barrage over Indus near Sukkur, could be allotted to landless peasants and peasant owners. It was started with the indigenous peasant slogan first raised by Shah Inayat in 17<sup>th</sup> century, that is, 'Jo Khery, So Khaey' (The Tiller of the land deserves the whole produce). Sikhs, Hindus, Samis, Sadhus, Sufis and Muslims all came to join Hari committee, independent of their religious or ethnic affiliations (Muhammad, 2008, pp. 25,28). Yet, by and large, in Sindh it has been the politics of

Muslim feudals versus secular and social peasant activists.

Hari Committee grew and became stronger with the passage of time. Taluka and district level sub-committees and working committees were established. Peasant activist worker grew steadily to several hundreds, and sympathizers multiplied in thousands. About a hundred peasant leaders were also prepared for struggle. There were about 30 members in the central Hari Committee that belonged to different religions and ethnic groups. (Muhammad, 2008, p. 54)

Hari Committee became one of the most successful non-political and non-parliamentary social organizations, although its members used to contest elections, after mutual consultations, independently as well as from different party tickets. Hence, it was, in reality, as political as any other political organization. It became the second most popular political organization, after congress, leaving Muslim league behind. Members of Hari Committee also contested in provincial elections in 1945. Haider Bux Jatoy after resigning from his post, joined Hari Committee, and contested in elections along with Maulana Aziz Jarwar and few other friends. Although they could not win a single seat due to the centuries of feudal-tribal hegemony and the grand alliance that the feudals of Sindh and Punjab had formed by clustering in a single party, that is, Muslim League. Yet, because of Hari Tehreek's popularity among common peasants, Muslim league and its feudal leaders could not gain required majority or votes to form the government, and due to that, the then English Governor announced new elections. That time leaders of Hari Tehreek adopted a different kind of strategy. They thought that they could not win from the platform of Hari Tehreek or that their political purpose cannot be realized by contesting as independent candidates. Moreover, they had become very much conscious of the increasing political strength of Muslim League throughout India, and its predominantly feudal membership. To seek the solid and more wider national level socialists and political platform, and to break the strength of feudal lords, to reconstruct Muslim League from within, peasant activists, and Sindhi socialists, strategically, with mutual consultation, started joining Muslim League. (Muhammad, 2008, pp. 25,26). It was the tactic that, in fact, helped them in the short term, but proved fatal for them in the long run. Hari Committee received another blow when Hindu and Sikh peasant activists left Sindh after partition. Moreover, after the coming into being of the new state of Pakistan, the new Islamic regime proved to be rather suppressive and anti-peasant, and the peasant activists of Sindh could not enjoy the liberty and the freedom to mobilize peasants, that enjoyed before partition (Muhammad, 2008, p. 60).

### **BATAI TEHREEK**

Qazi Faiz Muhammad, the leading social activist of that time also joined Hari Tehreek after the few years of its formation. Qazi proved to be the leading peasant activist, particularly in central Sindh, where he launched movements against *Batai* system and the Allati Tehreek for allotting the lands to landless peasants and indigenous peasants. During the period of Masood Khadarposh's collectorship (1945-46) of Nawabshah and Tom Kinston's of Sanghar, both of which were sympathetic and friendly towards peasant and peasant activists, peasant leaders under the leadership of Qazi Faiz Muhammad, along with Haider Bux Jatoy and several other prominent peasant activists, got encouraged to launch *Batai* Tehreek<sup>10</sup> there. Landlords were pressurized in Nawabshah and Sanghar to give half of the share of the produce to their respective tenants, and the tenants were encouraged to demand half of the share in produce. *Batai* Tehreek was believed to

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<sup>10</sup>Batai Tehreek', literally means, 'Share-distribution Movement', which was launched under the leadership of Haider Bux Jatoy, and Qazi Faiz Muhammad, has been the most successful peasant movement leading to the passing of Sindh Tenancy Act in 1950s. After that, none of the so called peasant movements in Sindh could have succeeded in achieving its avowed goals

be very successful, at least in those two districts. But it could not spread into other districts of Sindh and almost dissipated once Tom Kinston and M. Khadarposh left those districts.

Involvement and the seriousness demonstrated by the M. Khadarposh, and Tom Kinston, is the evidence that the role of officers can be both disabling and enabling for the social movements depending on which side politically they stand. Most of the times bureaucrats and officers have been found to serve the vested interests of the dominant feudal politicians. The examples of pro-poor and pro-peasant officers like Masood Khadarposh, Tom Kinston and Haider Bux Jatoi, are rarely to be found anywhere.

### **ELATI TEHREEK AND THE MOVEMENT AGAINST ONE-UNIT**

Hari Committee did not play any active role in the independence of Pakistan during partition years. It was understandable as Muslim League had become feudal party, and did not support pro-peasant land reforms. After partition, policies of the major political parties of Pakistan remained politically divisive and contradicting in terms of land reforms and tenancy rights of sharecroppers. According to Khadarposh (2002), one of the major causes of the separation of East Pakistan from the West was the belief in different and contradictory notions, about the bringing about land reforms, of the leading political leaders of both wings of Pakistan. West Pakistan, which was predominantly feudal, did not wish to forgo its privileged feudalistic stature, whereas the people of East Pakistan and their leaders had decided to eradicate feudalism and landlordism. (Khadarposh, 2002, p. 32. 33). Whereas in all states of India, land reforms were successfully brought up by their respective governments, and share-sharecroppers were given property rights over lands, it was still successfully resisted by the feudal politicians of West Pakistan, particularly Sindh (Khadarposh, 2002, pp. 68-71).

Hari Committee also failed to play any active role in the re-allotment of the 40% percent of the lands of Sindh that had been deserted due to the exodus of Sindhi Hindus from Sindh to India. Qazi Faiz Muhammad, being the member of Muslim League at that time, had much say in the affairs of Sindh government. Haider Bux Jatoi, being the president of Hari Committee at that time, remained active only in the publication of pamphlets and slogan-mongering. Qazi Fai Muhammad being the member of Muslim league as well, however, remained active, and stressed upon the then Chief Minister Khuhro to re-allot deserted agricultural lands to Sindhi peasants, sharecroppers and the landless indigenous communities of those areas, but the landlords were bit smarter than peasant activists. They started allotting vacant lands in the name of fake peasants and sharecroppers, yet kept them under their own control and encroachment to later get those lands registered in their names. Qazi Faiz Muhammad then launched Elati Tehreek and raised the slogan of 'Hari Haqdaar' (Peasant the deserver), but his own party members, most of whom were big landlords and feudals themselves turned against him and started complaining against him to Chief Minister of Sindh. (Muhammad, 2008, pp. 28,39).

The promulgation of one-unit by the Ayub proved not only anti-Sindhi but also anti-peasant for peasant activists of Sindh. The failure of Elati Tehreek during one-unit era, and the reduction in the peasant activism after 1954 is attributed by Qazi Faiz Muhammad to their extreme preoccupation with the issue of one-unit, instead of with the resolution of the issues of local peasants waiting for the formal allotment of their lands. It was romance of Sindh, and romance for Sindh that ruled the hearts and minds of leading peasant activists, particularly Comerade Haider Bux Jatoi and Qazi Faiz Muhammad. (Muhammad, 2008, p. 60)

The lands that were allotted to permanent tenants were being snatched with the assistance of police back to reallot to the newly migrant Urdu and Punjabi from India. The police started evacuating lands forcibly by burning the houses of

peasants. Meanwhile, Qazi Faiz Muhammad, Haider Bux Jatoy, Comerade Ghulam Muhammad and all the leading activists were imprisoned, harassed and threatened during all those years of political strife, internal clashes, and the opposition, but they did not back off from their struggle for the rights of indigenous peasants to secure their lands. Qazi Faiz Muhammad probably was the most active as far rights of indigenous peasants were concerned. Qazi Faiz Muhammad had launched the movement for the realltoment of land (Elati Tehreek), in unison with the civil disobedience movement against one-unit. In terms of turn out and peasant participation that combined struggle was less encouraging. About 111 peasants were arrested during that movement, and in later days, only 300 peasants could be gathered, the humble strength which was not being expected by peasant activists. Qazi Faiz Muhammad decided to stop the movement for the sake of peasants that could be imprisoned and fined. He feared that peasants would have to sell their bullocks to pay the fines and that would weaken and demoralize the peasant activists that had gathered near Mehrabpur. He appealed to the Deputy Commissioner, who not only immediately released arrested peasants but also waived fines. (Muhammad, 2008, p. 46) Still, it was, politically, the biggest blow for the peasant activists of Sindh, yet it became the source of inspiration as well. It was, in fact, for the first time in Sindh, after Shah Inayat's peasant communes about 250 years ago, that more than 400 peasants had gathered for the cause indigenous peasants.

The peasant movement for the re-allotment of land to permanent indigenous peasants went on for more than a decade. During that period, Hari Committee got disorganized and lost much of political clout and influence. During the 'Hari Conference' at Sakrand (1951-52), Hari committee got fragmented into two opposing groups. Although bifurcation of the Hari Committee weakened the collective strength of peasant activists and divided them into two groups, nevertheless they kept their political struggle continue. Constitution of Hari Committee was drafted during that era of internal strife and the weekly newspaper for peasants was also published. But since then Hari Committee started getting inactive and disorganized despite the reintegration of both opposing groups. Haider Bux Jatoy, in his individual capacity, remained more active than any other member of the Hari Committee, and kept struggling till his last breath.

During 1957-58, peasant activists tried to revitalize Elati Tehreek, by mobilizing affected peasants, visited peasant villages, held conferences, advertised and propagated through newspapers. They also re-visited their previous demands. Now they demanded that the lands allotted to local peasants should be sold to them on an appropriate price. The peasant mobilization seemed to work and the arrangement for the largest peasant gathering was made at Liyari in Karachi. Meetings were held, firstly with the president of Pakistan Iskandar Mirza and then with the minister of rehabilitation Anwar Adil. Both of the meetings were tragic and inconsequential from the peasant activist's perspective. Iskandar Mirza discouraged peaceful activism of peasants and tried to entice them for the bloodshed. Whereas, Anwar Adil taunted by pointing out the Sindhi peasant activist's sympathy for emigrated peasant landlords and tenants and the antipathy towards the new arrival Muslim peasants. Such a kind of response merely gave vent to ethno-nationalist feelings of peasant activists and the issue of land allotment seemed far from being settled. The fate of the Elati Tehreek was finally sealed after the promulgation of martial law in the country. (Muhammad, 2008, pp. 49,50,51)

Elati Tehreek, however, was neither a total failure. About 40% of the permanent peasants succeeded in securing allotment of the lands that they used to till for Hindu landlords. That reversal from sharecropping to self-cultivating small farming resulted in the emergence of new class of peasant-proprietors in rural Sindh. The rigid casteist and vertical hierarchical feudal system got a bit weakened and the thousands of peasant families took a sigh of relief, at least for the time being. (Muhammad, 2008, pp. 29,30)

## SEEKING MINOR CONSTITUTIONAL GUARANTEES FOR SHARECROPPERS

To bring about necessary but minor land reforms, constitutional amendments and legal changes in the *Batai* system and tenancy rights and for the re-allotment of land to local peasants, Haider Bux Jatui, Qazi Faiz and others launched parallel peasant movements. Both Elati Tehreek and *Batai* Tehreek, although failed in achieving most its demands, yet these movements did ultimately facilitated the passing of Sindh Tenancy Act 1950, later pro-peasant amendments in it in 1952, such as nullification of *Abwabs*, entitling tenants to an exactly half of the share (*Batai*) of the produce. *Abwabs* were actually, a dozen of minor shares that the landlord used to deduct from the share of share-tenant, in the name of the welfare of the village community. Early Peasants movements also positively influenced subsequent land reforms in 60s and 70s, in the decades that followed, although such reforms offered little substantial to poor peasants (Bhandar Sangat, 2012; Ercelawn & Nauman, 2001, pp. 31,35).

Land reforms brought about by successive governments have proved to be superficial and could not be implemented properly. In past, under government sponsored land reforms in 40s, 60s and 70s, *Wadera*-landlords used to lease or purchase land from government in the name of sharecroppers. In that way, sharecroppers were legal purchasers of land but the landlord held unchallenged control over leased land and the sharecropper itself. Installments were supposed to be paid by the landlord and after the completion of tenure; sharecroppers had to legally sell that land to the landlord. Land reforms, in fact, failed due to several reasons, some of them technical, as for example, land ceiling was kept very high in proportion to individual family member, and not in terms of whole family, the standard that allowed big landlords to retain their lands intact. Moreover, the dominance of feudal politicians at the policy making and implementation level, and big landlords at village and community level served as political and cultural barriers to substantive pro-peasant land reforms. During that reforming process, however, the right to land of indigenous peasants and landless migrant pastoral communities was completely ignored at all levels, and on the contrary, lands were allotted to wealthy purchasers from Punjab or to local big landlords. (Shah, Dec 2007; Khadarposh, 2002; PILER, 2010; Bhandar Sangat, 2012) Indigenous peasant and pastoral communities were deliberately ignored and were not considered as equal stakeholder in the landed area which had been their habitation and field for centuries.. (Bhandar Sangat, 2012; Shah, Dec 2007; Maree, 2013; Mal, 2000)

Failure of the subsequent governments to bring about substantive land reforms, or to protect the rights of ethnic peasant communities, indigenous tribes, and the fisher folk generated feelings of being deprived and alienated among the latter. In Bhutto's period and during Zia-ul-Haq' early rule, Fazul Rahu was the major peasant and labour leader who strongly believed in Maoist ideology to bring about similar type of nation-wide peasant revolution in Sindh and Pakistan. Rahu launched Awami Tehreek making local peasant's tool 'sickle' (a tool used for cutting crop) a symbol of peasant resistance, and raised the simple and straightforward folk slogan '*Hari Jeay*' (up with Peasant). His peasantist-Maoist activities, however, were simultaneously overwhelmed by ethno-nationalist and regional politics, the political attitude that naturally lies in most of the populist leaders. Awami Tehreek, for some time, got merged with the leftist Awami National Party (ANP) that was in fact the grand alliance of all leftist parties of Pakistan. During Zia's era Rahu was the leading popular politician that came from below from within lower middle class, and was instrumental in the launching of Movement for the 'Restoration of Democracy (MRD). Fazul's struggle also had had its impact on the mainstream politics that led to the land reforms in Bhutto's era, but, despite such an overwhelming charismatic influence over the masses, he could not produce a sustainable cadre of workers and leaders and resultantly, his party got disintegrated and disoriented

from its peasantisivist agenda, and got dragged into the Sindhi ethno-nationalist politics. After the politically motivated murder of Rahu, Rasool Bux Paleejo reformed Awami Tehreek into Sindhi People's Movement and later widened its ideological base on nationalist-socialist grounds and renamed it as Awami Tehreek, Pakistan (ATP), a progressive left of center party with an essentially ethno-nationalist and radically reformative socialist parliamentary agenda. Paleejo's struggle also revolved around MRD, and his struggle for democracy and against the dictatorial rule of the military general put him into prison for 11 years. Yet his reformed socialist program also, due to several internal and external factors, failed to penetrate the rural Sindh, and could not win the hearts of the peasants of Sindh. His failure to mobilize the masses is so obvious that ATPs leadership does not pretend to hoodwink it, but they do not put the burden of the failure upon their own shoulders, and instead, without any valid proof although there could be such proofs, keep alleging feudal political clout, the state authorities, and intelligence agencies for sabotaging their campaigns, stealing their vote bank, and electoral rigging.

In 1977, communist party, Qasim Pathar Group and Sindhi Nationalists again reorganized 'Sindhi *Hari* Committee' for the short period of time. But then after few years' activism, Sindh *Hari* Committee could only succeed in maintaining its formal organization just on paper and did not remain as active and functional as it had been during the previous decades. Naz Sanai, the Sindhi Marxist intellectual writes about the eventual impotency of Hari Committee thus:

Hari Committee of Sindh succeeded, to some extent, in its initial goal of creating awareness among peasants about their rights, but could not sustain its activism [to produce the cadre of committed worker-activists], and, eventually, it got trapped in the conspiracies hatched by Waderas (big landlords). Now it is remembered and read only in the books of history (Sanai, 1984, p. 13)

### **SHIFTING PEASANT ISSUES AND THE CHANGING FOCUS OF PEASANT ACTIVISTS**

Jan Breman, the professor Emeritus, has pithily explained the nature of sharecropping in Sindh as such:

The sharecropping system here is not only a form of superexploitation, but maintains an agrarian regime that has harmful effects in a general economic sense. The landlords' political lobby remains as powerful as ever, and there is no sign of the thoroughgoing land reform that is so urgently called for. (Breman, *The Undercities of Karachi*, 2014)

In a report issued in 2009, on the 'Effectiveness of Interventions for the Release and Rehabilitation of Bonded Laborers in Pakistan', extreme kind of exploitative practices, such as bonded labour, widely prevails in Pakistan, particularly in lower Sindh and southern Punjab, despite the constant efforts of NGOs judiciary, government, media and the civil society. It was strongly recommended that the country-wide massive land reforms are necessary to end labour exploitation practices such as bonded labour." (Daily Times, 2009). Land reforms are believed to be the antidote for almost all kinds of evils that prevail in peasant societies. Hence, it has become a truism in itself that land ownership raises social status, social prestige, generate income sources and have some intrinsic values as well. "It is perhaps for these perceived opportunities of social inclusion through land that the redistribution of land has often been perceived as the key strategy for social transformation. "Most of the focus has typically been around the issue of access to land" (Lindemann, June 2010, p. 23). But, paradoxically, little attention has been paid by peasant activists and the governments to "the issue of whether access to land leads to any significant shift in social structures and processes. [It has never] been a central concern or focus

of debate [of] grassroots activism, even by the MST<sup>11</sup>. (Lindemann, June 2010, p. 23). Similarly in Sindh, peasant activists have often engaged themselves in the much idealized goal of bringing about land reforms to ensure access to land through the equal redistribution of land. But, ironically, they have, in reality, during peasantivist activities dealt with issues that address to issues that go beyond the notion of 'land reforms'. Access to land or land reforms has meant many things for them. Moreover, the intermixing, complicating and lumping land reforms and other peasant issues with the socialist, ethno-nationalist, nationalist and global agendas as done by Marxists, Sindhi nationalists, Pakistani nationalists, and the global neoliberal regime respectively, makes the solution of the localized issues of peasants pragmatically impossible.

It is often unwittingly assumed that the issue of 'land reforms' to redistribute cultivable land among the deserving local peasants and landless sharecroppers, has been the top most agenda of peasant activists in Sindh, and or probably elsewhere in rural communities in South Asia. Solution of peasant issues are ultimately found in bringing about land reforms in that particular sense, that is to redistribute land equally, the ideal and much idealized goal that has never been materialized in the sub-continent. Yet peasant movements that have been launched by peasants of Sindh, have not always been pre-emptive or self-driven struggles for the land reforms. Rather their movements have often been reactive and defensive, and aimed at elevating immediate and emerging issues that concerned them most at that juncture of history. Hence, even the peasant communes established by Shah Inayat in 17<sup>th</sup> century A.D were, in fact, formed in reaction to the extremely oppressive agrarian policies of the rulers of that time, and were very much local in nature, and did not specifically aimed at establishing such communes throughout the Sindh or Mughal Empire. Similarly, *Batai Tehreek*, *Allati Tehreek*, and the movement launched for the reforms in Tenancy laws did not directly aimed at radical land reforms aimed at the redistribution of cultivable land. All such movements were focused on particular issue and immediate socio-economic or political act by the dominants, or by the government that was perceived by peasant activists as constraining the socio-economics of the common peasant at that time

Hence, in Sindh during the last six decades peasant movements and rural-based socio-political movements have been mainly a single issue-based at one point in time, such as *Batai Tehreek* in 1950s was specifically launched against unequal distribution of the produce, or the *Allati Tehreek* (Muhammad, 2008; Bhandar Sangat, 2012) during and after partition years that focused solely on the issue of land allotment. According to Malkani after partition in Sindh Muslim refugees from India succeeded in grabbing "60 lakh acres" that were left by Hindu migrants to India, in a short span of few years (Malkani, 1997, p. 103) Thus, although these movements were issue-based and could not succeed in their avowed mission to get lands allotted to local indigenous peasants, nor could succeed in getting implemented equal share of the produce, these movements, nevertheless, did make some impact on the over sharecropper-landlord relationships.

Another peasant-cum-ethno-nationalist movement emerged on the issue that involved several political parties throughout Pakistan, and that was the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy (MRD). MRD had its prime purpose to restore democracy as against dictatorship, but in Sindh it was led by peasant leftist parties and leaders like Fazul Rahu of Awami Hari Tehreek. Similarly, Sindhi ethno-linguistic movement in 1971-72 against Urdu-ethnic urban population of Sindh was also issued based movement having its base in rural Sindh and directly or indirectly involved actual peasants and peasant activists; so were recent token long-march driven movements against Kala Bagh Dam launched by Awami Tehreek Pakistan, except a peasant long March by Zulfiqar Shah in 2010 that exclusively demanded substantive land

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<sup>11</sup> MST, or 'Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra' is the acronym that stands for the landless peasant movement of the peasants of Brazil

reforms for redistribution of landed property equally among the deserving peasants of their respective areas. Hence, recent wave of peasant activism in lower Sindh, however, is different from that of the sociopolitical movements of the last few decades that were self-defensive in nature and driven either by Marxist activists or by Sindhi nationalists, and were specifically single-issue based.

As the peasant issues have shifted, so has shifted the focus of peasant activists of Sindh that have acted as agents of change in several capacities. Peasant Activists have always been versatile and inclusive in their approach towards social activism. They indulge in all those activities that aim at benefiting the common people and ethnic minorities independent of their religion and caste. Peasant activists in Sindh have been members of several political parties, belong to diverse kind of background and become politically active whenever and wherever situation has demanded them to act. A single peasant activist remains active, during his lifetime, in several capacities. He or She may act as Pakistani activists, Sindhi activists, Muslim Activists, Social Activists, Civil Society Activists, Sufi activists, political party activist, Socialist Activists and Marxist Activist when it suits their purpose. For instance, Masood Khadarposh and Qazi Faiz Muhammad can be said to be the role models for social activists. They not only struggled for the rights of tenant and peasants, but also for ethnic minorities, and for the common good of society. Masood Khadarposh struggled for the welfare of marginalized Bheel community of Bombay to the extent that he was elevated to the status of 'God' by the Bheels. Masood Khadarposh and Qazi Faiz Muhammad also did struggle for the cause Kashmiri people after the partition. Qazi Faiz Muhammad, together with Masood Khadarposh, and some support from local landlords, launched 'Charkha Tehreek', on the Gandhian model, to knit and wear indigenously produced clothes. Almost all peasant activists of Sindh played instrumental role against the one-unit during Ayub's era (Muhammad, 2008).

Qazi Faiz Muhammad was the pragmatic peasant activist and would not hesitate to experiment by joining different parties and political groups. He has been the general secretary for Sindh of Awami League, the political party of East Pakistan, during the era of Suharwardy. He became its member due to Awami League's opposition to one-unit, and when Awami League's leadership backed off from its principles stance, Qazi Faiz Muhammad, together with Moulana Bhashani and Shaikh Abudl Majeed Sindhi, founded National Awami Party. All progressive minded, liberal, secular and socialist friends joined that party, as if the new and vigorous 'Hari Committee had come into being' (Muhammad, 2008, p. 41)

## NGO-ISING OF PEASANT ACTIVISM

In 1990s, global changes in the form of the spread of donor-driven NGO sector, INGOs, increase in the role of international organizations, increasing mechanization, industrialization, coming of information technology, and the spread of mass media, for the first time seemed to show its impact on the rural culture and on the nature of peasant activism in rural Sindh. The succeeding democratic governments of PPP and the PML-N also failed to deliver to the masses thus providing INGOs and international donors an excuse and the justification to channel their grants for Pakistan through non-state, non-governmental development sector. These changes created space for NGOs to flourish and infused new, although opportunistic spirit among the class of social workers and peasant activists. In the middle of 1990s, when landless peasants were freed from bonded labor and were temporarily settled in *Hari* Camps, the new legal issues of forced labor, migratory status of peasants and the resettlement emerged. (Ercelawn & Nauman, 2001, pp. 15, 16, 17; Bhandar Sangat, 2012, p. 11; Maree, 2013). All these development led to the intrusion of peasant activists in NGO sector and vice versa.

Like their predecessors, NGOs also failed to dilver to the masses and peasants. Peasant activists working in NGO sector, as well as, the funding and advocacy based organizations failed to provide sustainable alternatives to peasants, particularly those who were released or fled from private jails to get rid of social bondage with the hope that they would be properly rehabilitated (Breman, 2008; Breman, 2010). Nevertheless, despite the general failure of development sector and that of peasant activists, these newly emerging issues increased peasant awareness and awareness of peasant activists about the actual workable mechanism, new technicalities and strategies to resolve peasant issues. They again reorganized themselves, adopting more formal and democratic means, established advocacy-based NGOs or became active members of NGOs working for the rights of peasants, women, laborers, fishermen and indigenous communities. Those were the times, in fact, when Humanitarianism echoed louder than the open political activism for peasant rights. Facts and figures were gathered on the status of peasants, sharecroppers and bonded laborers and the interventionist policies and projects were launched. Yet despite such interventions, and occasional successes, the exploitative system remained intact, and still dominates the rural cultural scene, as about “1.8 million people are still in the bonded share cropping practices across Pakistan in agriculture alone” (Daily Times, 2009)

Hence, to economically help and assist, in short term, the individual peasant victims of bonded labour, seemed to be a better strategy than the outright political mobilization of the bonded laborers and sharecroppers for land reforms or for their social, cultural, ecological and economic rights. They started establishing registered associations and organizations (N.G.Os) and sought formal assistance from international well-wishers. Bhandar Sangat, for instance, is one such NGO. It is one of the prominent and most active Peasant NGO in lower Sindh, and works in collaboration with one another voluntary peasant and laborer association called Sindh *Hari* Porihiat Council (SHPC). The social and humanitarian platform provided by donor-driven N.G.Os not only helped organize peasant activists and severed for them as a kind of much needed source of income, it also provided them with the sense of security and legitimacy to their peasantivist activism.

Due to the disorganization and also probably due to state’s suppression of leftist pro-peasant political parties, several former left-inclined comrades joined such NGOs to advocate for the rights of peasants, laborers, and marginalized sections of Sindhi society. It helped them organize seminars, protests, rallies and peasant marches. The efficacy and relevance of action agendas of peasant activists, development programs and the seeking of fully funded projects from outside mostly western INGOs and international mostly Western capitalist donors, really depends on peasant activists’ sensibility, knowledge of peasant’s real issues and sincerity to the cause of peasant’s emancipation. Former leftist peasant activists, due to their years of experience have no difficulty in satisfying the curiosity of the donors, and usually succeed in getting funds and launching development programs for the peasants, rural women, ethnic minorities, bonded laborers, and revolving around the themes of education, health, awareness, basic amenities, decent working conditions for laborers, tenancy rights, sustainable development, community-based management and recently, environmental justice. All these issues and programs are worded and implemented in a way so that the authority and power to implement projects may remain in the hands of non-peasant, non-community, external experts, technicians, managers and executives of NGOs and INGOs. Although few researches commissioned by INGOs and international organizations, such as World Bank, FAO and ‘Asian Development Bank, have suggested the adoption of bottom-up approach’ (Lieten & Breman, 2002) and stressed community participation or the establishment of peasant councils in rural Sindh to offset the marginalizing and disempowering practices of feudals and big landlords, yet the INGOs and sponsoring donors do not bring such reports into serious consideration probably because of the fear of losing control over the global capitalist system of which such INGOs

and donor agencies are an integral part.

The general condition humanitarianism in Sindh and Pakistan is that most of those working in development sector, probably due to their lack of political experience, feel no qualms to parasitize on the development funding. They are unable to see through the hollowness and inefficacy of project-based development programs, yet there are few, such as former leftist activists and peasant leaders of the past have not much faith in NGO-led development, and often express their feeling of guilt, and the compromising of their belief in an essentially political solution to the issues of peasants. Hence, partly due to the lack of political activism by peasant activists, and partly due the already existing dominant exploitative, economic, political and social system, the exploitative structure exists, particularly in lower Sindh, with all of its essentials that perpetuates bonded labor, unpaid labour, social bondage, landlessness and ethnic-peasant discrimination in sharecropping arrangements.

## CONCLUSIONS

Peasant Activism has evolved itself from an outright rebellions, open popular struggles and peasant movements, to a kind of sustained activism for the resolution of multiple and highly diverse peasant issues. In Sindh during the last six decades, peasant movements and rural-based socio-political movements have been focused mainly on a single issue at one point in time, despite their apprehensions of multiple issues that peasant communities had been beset with. Moreover, not a single issue has been dominant throughout the history of peasant activism in Sindh, although it is usually assumed that peasants have struggled and primarily struggle for land reforms. Bringing about land reforms to equally redistribute land has been the ideal goal of peasant activists but it has not been the unilateral demand, neither monolithic agenda, nor it has been actively pursued as a clearly defined one-issue program by peasant activists. For them land reforms have meant many things, such as, getting rid of imperialist forces, seeking communal autonomy over their lands, seeking minor constitutional concessions for share-tenants as in case of *Batai Tehreek*, and the re-allotment of evacuated land to indigenous share-tenants through *Elati Tehreek*. Hence, there issues did not merely revolve around land reforms to redistribute land, but have shifted in focus over the year, and attended to scores of issues such as Tenancy laws, re-allotment of land and the rights of permanent sharecroppers. Land reforming agenda is often appended with other related issues such as environmental issues, justifiable distribution of Indus water, right of indigenous communities, rights of fishermen, ecology of Delta, building of dam, establishment of peasant cooperatives, corporate farming, dairy farming, and issues of pastoral migratory communities etc. These issues have often been intermeshed with the issues of Sindh in general and the issues of Sindhi ethnic group in particular.

Lately, peasant movement in Sindh has got transformed into a kind multidimensional activism having multiple loci, in a kind of graduated and sustained struggle launched by trans-local peasant activists. Peasant activists do not exclusively pursue peasant issues, but also serve as social activists, rural social workers, Sindhi civil society activists, Sindhi ethno-nationalists, members of advocacy-based NGOs, human rights organizations, leftist and as the Marxist activists. It is multi-local, multi-issued, yet all of such issues having implicit or explicit links with the life of actual sharecroppers and peasants. Issues are activated and externalized by peasant activists through a kind of multiple and highly diverse social activism channeled through mass media, social media, internet, civil society and ethnic and ethnonationalist politics. Hence, in today's globalizing world, Peasant 'movements' in Sindh, as labeled by local peasant activists, have become so much diverse, sustained, regular and multi-purpose that the term 'movement', which connotes large scale overt

resistance launched with some public consensus for achieving a particular goal, does not seem fit to explain the movement-like yet sustained 'activism' that is localized yet multidimensional in scope and influence, and simultaneously resistant to dominant Sindh-Muslim-Feudalistic discourse and the macro-political status quo. Although peasant activists of Sindh and their activism is still largely detached from the transnational peasant movement, yet it has become so much diversified in its goals and scope and seems to be gradually spreading its social networking throughout the globe, that their union and closer interaction and engagement with international and transnational peasant movements seems inevitable in coming years.

Yet, despite all its diversity and sustained nature of its resistance, peasant activists, being mostly dependent on N.G.Os, lack in political will, commitment and clarity as regards the issues of peasants and their solutions. Hence, partly due to the lack of substantive political activism by peasant activists, and partly due the already existing relatively perpetual dominant exploitative, economic, political and social system, the structured exploitation exists, particularly in lower Sindh, with all of its essentials that perpetuates bonded labor, unpaid labour, social bondage, landlessness and ethnic-peasant discrimination in sharecropping arrangements.

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