

Land reforms in India during 1947-70

The main characteristics of the agrarian structure which independent India inherited were:-

- (a) absentee land ownership
- (b) exploitation of tenants through high rents and insecurity of tenure.
- (c) Unequal distribution of land
- (d) tiny and fragmented holdings.
- (e) Lack of adequate institutional finance to agriculture.

Need for Land Reforms

→ Land ownership was highly unequal at the time of independence. There was a parasitic class of intermediaries who played no role in production.

→ The vast majority of actual cultivators were either tenants or sub tenants without any security of tenure.

* Before independence there were 3 systems of land tenure
I) Zamindari System II) Mahalwari system and
III) Ryotwari system.

I) Zamindari system was introduced by Lord Cornwallis in 1793 through Permanent settlement. In this system zamindars were more interested in higher rent than in agricultural improvement. It is two types
Permanent settlement - fixed land revenue in perpetuity

This system was prevalent in Bengal, Madras and Bombay.
Temporary settlement : Land revenue was assessed for a period ranging b/w 20 and 40 yrs in various states.
→ Zamindari system was introduced to foster aggressive agriculture, degenerated into absentee landlordism.
→ Thus b/w state and actual tiller, there grew an intermediary who was interested in extraction of exorbitant rent. Thus money extracted from these parasites did not result in capital formation but increased conspicuous consumption.

2) Ryotwari settlement - The individual holders were directly responsible to the state for the payment of land revenue. This tenure was prevalent in Bombay, Bihar and central India.

3) Mahalwari settlement - Here village lands were held jointly by the village communities, the members of which were jointly responsible for the payment of land revenue. This system was prevalent in Punjab, Agra and Oudh.

Land Reforms after Independence - Land reforms refers to reforms undertaken in the land tenure system.

1) Abolition of Intermediaries - Following the recommendation of Kumarappa committee all the states in India enacted legislation for abolition of intermediary tenure in the 1950s, although the nature and effects of such legislation varied from state to state.

1) Tenancy Reforms - The legislation for abolition of intermediaries was aimed at providing land to the tiller but it did not put an end to the problem of tenancy, some tenancy leasing is bound to remain. A widow or unmarried woman, a minor or person suffering from mental infirmity or member of the armed forces may have to lease out their lands.

2) Measures of tenancy reforms -

1) Regulation of Rent 2) Security of tenure

3) Conferment of ownership on tenants.

VII) Ceilings on Land holding - It refers to the legally stipulated maximum size beyond which no individual farmers or farm household can hold any land. The objective of such ceiling is to promote economic growth with social justice. It has been duly recognised by policy makers, that beyond a certain limit any large scale farming in Indian situation becomes not only uneconomic but also unjust. Small farms tend to increase economic efficiency of resources use and improve social equity through employment creation and more equitable income distribution. Certain categories of lands were exempted from the ceiling laws such as Land under Tea, coffee, Rubber, sugarcane farms, Tank fisheries, co-operative gardens, colonies, land held by co-operative farming and religious and charitable, and educational institutions etc.

BHOODAN AND GRAMDAN - Bhoodan movement was launched in 1951 immediately after the Peasant uprising in Telangana region in A.P and after some years another movement known as Gramdan came into being in 1957. The objective was to persuade land owners and leaseholders in each concerned village to renounce their land rights after which all lands would become the property of a village association for the egalitarian redistribution and for purpose of joint cultivation. Vinoba Bhave hoped to eliminate private property of land through Bhoodan and gramdan and maintained that the movement would go a long way to ensure the just redistribution of land and joint cultivation. However the movement failed to achieve its targeted objectives and the degree of success in respect of both land acquisition and Land distribution was very limited.
→ In most cases the village land lords donated only those piece of land which were either unfit for cultivation or were in dispute with tenants or govt