

LAND REFORMS SINCE INDEPENDENCE

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During the last years of the colonial era, numerous committees and commissions called for agrarian reforms and worked out appropriate suggestions. If prior to independence the demand for agrarian reforms was part of the strategy of the leading parties to gain power, independence fostered not only a favourable climate for such measures, but helped the new government to legitimize their power.

1. **Abolition of the 'Intermediaries'**- In 1951 as the first agrarian reform measure, the intermediaries the numerous revenue collectors who often did not have a definite function lost their right. This measure did not aim at abolishing the ownership of large amounts of land, but only of specific rights. Among those who were affected were numerous small zamindars who carried low incomes from a few acres of land. Often this was their only source of income, and they had come legally into possession of it, either through purchase or inheritance.
2. **Tenancy Reforms** -The objective of the tenancy reform laws was to establish and strengthen the tenants rights. A minimum leasing period of 5 to 10 years was introduced and eviction was not allowed on the basis of specific reasons. Sub-leasing was forbidden and in the case of eviction the tenant was to be paid compensation for his investments. Finally the tenant was granted the right to purchase the land to be cultivated. Sub tenants who had cultivated a plot of land for already more than 12 years gained the status of occupancy tenants and were thus protected against eviction.

Consequences of the Agrarian Reforms – In simple terms one can say that the reforms were directed against the feudal landlords and against poor tenants and agricultural labourers where as they benefitted the rural middle class, especially the upper middle class. The top of the traditional upper class, especially the revenue collectors who had no definite function, were eliminated as well as the largest landowners, especially in India. But large scale landed property was not abolished, only restricted, and land concentration was thus somewhat reduced. These measures were especially directed against the landlords who did not cultivate their own

land or at least manage its cultivation, but restricted themselves to collecting rent.

The Green Revolution and Land Tenure – One of the objectives of those concerned with agrarian reforms was to increase production. In second half of the sixties, technological changes took place in agriculture which exercised a strong influence on the production level. The yield increases resulting from the Green Revolution were so obvious that within a few years, the new technology had taken over in all of the regions where it was possible to apply it. The increased production in agriculture as a result of the utilisation of new materials with a high yield potential in conjunction with more water, fertiliser's, and pesticides is called Green Revolution. The Green Revolution is therefore a mixed blessing. It brought about decisive advances in agricultural production, but also serious economic and social problems, because of the prevailing conditions at the time.

In the 1960's and 1970's every Indian state passed tenancy reform legislation . The various five year plans laid the various guidelines for agrarian reforms. The key aspects of the various laws relate to :-

- Defining a tenant
- Landlord's right to resume tenanted land for personal cultivation.
- Conferment of ownership rights on tenants.
- Voluntary surrender of tenant's rights by the tenant.
- Prohibition of future tenancies
- Rent levels for those tenancies that are allowed.
- Length of term for those tenancies that are allowed.
- Tenant's rights of pre-emptive purchase
- Public recording of tenancies.

Conclusion- All states should consider practicable non-ceiling approaches to broaden access to land ownership. They should be beneficiary driven, there should be purchase plus improvements, there should be integrated technical assistance and lastly cost recovery plan.

