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LAND REFORMS AND LAND OWNERSHIP IN INDIA: A STUDY

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Abstract: Land reform includes the varying of laws, regulations or customs regarding land ownership. Land reform might involve of a government-initiated or government-backed property redistribution, usually of agricultural land. Land reforms mean reasonable rearrangement of land with the aim of increasing output and decreasing insufficiency. It refers to the rearrangement of land from the few who have to the many who are landless or own far too little.

Keywords— Land distribution, Colonial Era, Zamindari System, Private Ownership, Mahalwari System

INTRODUCTION

Land distribution has been part of India's state policy from the commencement. Independent India's greatest revolutionary land policy was perhaps the abolition of the Zamindari system (feudal landholding practices). Land-reform policy in India had two particular objects: "The first is to eliminate such impediments to increase in agricultural production as rise from the agrarian structure congenial from the past. The second objective, which is strictly related to the first, is to eliminate all essentials of exploitation and social injustice within the agrarian system. Usually, in India before the coming of the British, private ownership of land was an unacquainted impression. Land was usually owned by the village community together. A proper land revenue system was initiated by Todar Mal during the reign of Akbar. Under this system, land was measured, classified, and the rent was fixed consequently. When the leash of power went into the hands of the British, a sea-change was seen in the pattern of ownership of land in India.

LAND OWNERSHIP PATTERNS UNDER THE BRITISH RULE

Lord Cornwallis presented the Permanent Settlement in 1793. Under this system, a class of landlords called Zamindars was shaped whose accountability it was to pay a fixed rental to the government for the lands they possessed. They gave out parcels of land to agriculturalists who became their occupants. Their title to the land was genetic. What was intended as a system helpful for all parties worried soon twisted out to be exploitative? The State was only concerned with maximizing revenue with least effort. The Zamindar too wanted extreme rent from his occupants regardless of the land's true possible. He could upsurge his own wealth by removing most out of his farmer occupants then his due to the State was fixed. In adding, several layers of intermediaries were shaped between the Zamindar and the occupants adding to the burden. The landless farmers and labourers feel pain greatly in poverty. This led to the making of a group of rich Indians whose loyalty lay mostly with the British. As you can see the Permanent Settlement gave growth to the Zamindari system of tenancy in Bengal and soon was adopted in other regions. Additional system was called the Jagirdari system which was related to the Zamindari system.

RYOTWARI SYSTEM

Under this system, the proprietor of land gave the rent and taxes straight to the government in the absence of any middlemen. This started in Madras and was later approved in Bombay as sound.

MAHALWARI SYSTEM

This system was introduced by **William Bentinck's** government under which landlords were accountable for the payment of revenue to the State. These landlords or Zamindars had a entire village or a group of villages under their control. The Mahalwari system prevailed in UP, the North Western Province, Punjab and parts of Central India.

OUTCOMES OF LANDOWNING SYSTEMS DURING THE COLONIAL ERA

- I. Extreme peasant indebtedness due to sky-high tax rates.
- II. Formation of a class of a rich few who generally exploited the poor peasant.
- III. Peasants lived in constant fear of eviction.
- IV. Poverty was entrenched into the farmer class.

These systems shaped, at the time of independence, a class of landlords who owned large swathes of land and innumerable peasants who owned nothing and lived in dire poverty and misery.

LAND REFORMS SINCE INDEPENDENCE

Land reforms refer to the regulation of ownership, operation, leasing, sales, and inheritance of land. Land is the foundation of all economic activity and for a largely agrarian society like India; this transmits a lot of importation. Indian rural society is symbolised by a rich landowning minority (zamindars/landlords) and a needy landless majority (peasants). Therefore, land reforms are an important step towards economic and social justice.

Objectives of land reforms:

- Redistribution of land across society so that land is not held in the hands of a few people.
- Land ceiling to disburse surplus land amongst small and marginal farmers.
- Removal of rural poverty.
- Abolition of intermediaries.
- Tenancy reforms.
- Increasing agricultural productivity.
- Consolidation of land holdings and prevention of land fragmentation.
- Developing cooperative farming.
- To ensure social equality through economic parity.
- Tribal protection by ensuring their traditional land is not taken over by outsiders.
- Land reforms were also for non-agricultural purposes like development and manufacturing.

ZAMINDARI ABOLITION ACTS

Primarily, when these acts were passed in various states, they were challenged in the courts as being against the right to property enshrined in the Indian Constitution. Thus, amendments were passed in the Parliament to legalise the abolition of landlordism. By 1956, Zamindari abolition acts were passed in many states. As a outcome of this, about 30 lakh tenants and share-croppers acquired ownership rights over a total of 62 lakh acres of land all over the nation.

LAND CEILINGS ACT

Land ceiling refers to fixing a cap on the size of landholding a family or individual can possess. Some surplus land is distributed among landless people like tenants, farmers, or agricultural labourers. This focused on three areas:

- I. Rent regulation
- II. Tenure security
- III. Conferring ownership to tenants

OUTCOMES OF LAND REFORMS

1. *Abolition of middlemen like landlords:* The powerful class of Zamindars and Jagirdars stop to exist. This abridged the exploitation of peasants who now became landlords of the land they tilled. This alteration was fervently opposite by the Zamindars who working many means to avoid the law. They registered their own land under their relations' terms. They also scuffled tenants around dissimilar plots of land so that they wouldn't obtain incumbency rights.
2. *Land ceiling:* With a cap on the size of landholding, an individual could hold reasonable circulation of land was possible to an extent. With only landlord elimination and no land ceiling, the land reforms would not have been at least incompletely successful. Land ceiling confirmed that the rich farmers or higher tenants did not become the new avatar Zamindars.
3. *Land possession:* Land is a basis of not just economic income but also social standup. Land reforms made it compulsory to have records of assets, which was not the case before. It is also required to register all tenancy provisions.
4. *Increased productivity:* Land reforms were mainly fruitful in the states of West Bengal and Kerala since of the political will of the left-wing governments to tool them professionally. There was a sort of revolution in these places in terms of landholding patterns and ownership and too the form of peasants. The backing slogan was '*land to the tiller*'. In Jammu and Kashmir and there was partial achievement in the rearrangement of land to landless laborers.

CONCLUSION

The government was accountable for the attainment of land which it did under the Land Acquisition Act of 1894. This law, being archaic and insufficient to speech farmers' anxieties was substituted by the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act of 2013. In 2015, the government future a few alterations to the law and presented the Right to Fair

Recompense and Transparency in land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement (Amendment) Bill of 2015, which came into result as an rule.

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