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# Agrarian Structures and Land Reforms in Assam

M.N. Karna



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"The book presents a crisp and very readable account of land reform measures, agrarian structure and agrarian discontent and mobilisations in Assam. The author has traced the development on the backdrop of the Ahom Period. This is as it should be since most of the inspirations for land reform as well as clashes with governmental measures in the colonial period arose out of the ground realities of pre-colonial times. It is a scholarly work. The sources of information and interpretative comments are well-documented."

—*A.C. Bhagwati*

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*M.N. Karna*

**North-Eastern Hill University Publications**

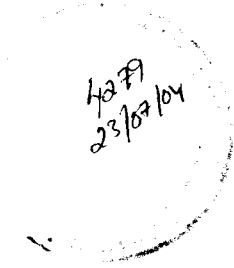
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## LAND REFORM: THE PERSPECTIVE AND CONTEXT

Agrarian structure and change forms a critical aspect of any discourse on socio-economic development in India today. The *enigma of economic backwardness and underdevelopment*, issues of rural unrest and violence and of social institutions and values are all involved in the basic nature of the agrarian question. This becomes obvious if one keeps in mind the predominating agrarian character of this country where land continues to be the mainstay of the people. Land thus constitutes not only the structural feature of the Indian countryside but changes in land relations act as the prime mover of social, economic and political transformation as well.

In this study an attempt has been made to present a broad view of land reforms and agrarian change undertaken by the Government in Assam, an area of exceptional interest in North-east India. Land reform is a theme that has both a theoretical and a pragmatic side. It is proposed to dwell on the former with a contention that policy decisions and effective action can be generative only if they are informed by proper and adequate understanding of the agrarian question.

### **Concept of Land Reform**

In ordinary usage, land reform means the breaking up of large landholdings and their redistribution among landless poor peasants. Such reforms are believed to have been undertaken in ancient

Greece in the sixth century B.C. and in Rome in the second century B.C. In recent times similar attempts were made in Mexico after 1910, Egypt in 1952 and Bolivia in 1953. In all these cases erstwhile landowning people were dispossessed and the size of holdings was changed for their distribution among the deprived classes. Another pattern was followed when land tenure relationships were transformed without any visible change in the size of operational holdings. This was the main thing that happened after the French Revolution in 1789. The Japanese land reforms of 1946 and those of Taiwan after 1949 were other examples of this type. In all these reforms primary goals have been abolition of feudal tenures, rent reduction and conversion of tenants into owners. Thus political equity and social justice were primary motives behind this traditional pattern of land reform. In this respect, the Marxian thought contributed in breaking with the classic tradition of all reform by combining a doctrinal stress on nationalisation of land.

Another pattern of land reform is also found in which peasants' hunger for land has been used as a political vehicle for the achievement of tenure reform accompanied by land distribution. Such reforms have created large managerial units under a variety of forms like communal, cooperative or collective tenure or state ownership. This trend was set in the Soviet Union between 1917 and 1931, in Mainland China after 1949 and in Cuba during 1959-1963.

Land reform in the modern sense can also be traced from the emancipation of serfs in imperial Russia in 1861 and slaves in the United States in 1863. Both these versions of reform put emphasis on personal freedom, equity and social justice. Despite widely different settings, scales and consequences, abolition of serfdom in Russia and of slavery in the United States showed the inadequacies of land tenure systems in which men rather than land were owned. However, even after over a century, traces of tenure in men rather than in land still exist in some parts of Asia, the Middle East and Latin America. This goal nevertheless characterized many reform movements of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries prominent among them were Irish struggle to abolish absentee ownership after 1870, the victory of the Danish small holder movement in 1901, and the Stolypin reforms in Russia between 1906 and 1911.<sup>1</sup>

In fact, the term land reform has been used both in a narrow as well as in a very broad sense depending upon the objective and the context of its use. In the narrow and generally accepted sense, land reform means redistribution of rights in land for the benefit of small farmers and agricultural labourers.<sup>2</sup> This concept reduces land reform to its simplest element commonly found in all land reform policies. On the other hand, a broad definition is also in vogue by which land reform is understood to mean any improvement in the institutions of land tenure or agricultural organisation.<sup>3</sup> By putting emphasis on such a conception of reform policy it has been suggested that governments which undertake land reform measures should not go only for redistribution of land but should also initiate other measures to improve condition of agriculture. Issues like tenancy reform, agricultural credit, cooperative organisation, agricultural education and extension services have been included under these measures.

The United Nations accepted a highly economic-oriented definition of land reform:

Land reform is treated more broadly as equivalent to agrarian reform and agrarian institutional reform. It clearly includes change in land tenure, but also includes the establishments or strengthening of essential governmental, cooperative or commercial agencies or relating to agricultural credit, supply, marketing, extension, and research. So conceived, the ideal land reform programme is an integrated programme of measures designed to eliminate obstacles to economic and social development arising out of defects in the agrarian structure.<sup>4</sup>

It is apparent that no clear distinction is made here between land reform and agrarian reform. The United Nations started using the term land reform as if it were a substitute for agrarian reform. Land reform came to be frequently referred to as a means to increase productivity and to strengthen the capitalistic mode of production. Moreover, this definition emphasizes primarily the operational aspect of land reform and fails to reflect the political facts underlying it.<sup>5</sup>

The above notions of land reform besides differing in scope and scale vary also in their essential objectives. The breaking up of large holdings for redistribution among the landless is not the

same as improving agricultural extension services. While the former is always difficult and controversial, the latter hardly requires any extra action and manoeuvre. The redistribution of property rights in land is thus a political question and cannot be equated with agricultural credit or agricultural education. It involves dispossession of rights of landowners who are inevitably dominant and powerful both socially and politically. It invariably assumes the character of conflict of interests, leading to a fight between 'haves' and 'have-nots'. Thus by nature, land reform is a social change involving economic, political and social arrangements at a particular point of time.

There are no universal motivations behind land reform *per se* but some common ground may be found everywhere. The pressure for change in land relations may be generated through mobilisation of small peasants and landless workers, a pressure that may be informed by conflicting ideologies. While capitalist ideology may influence communist programme in some cases, communist inspired action may affect capitalist thinking. 'Underlying motivations may be totally opposed, even if the aim appears to be the same: one government may abolish large landownership in the hope of preparing the way for democracy, while another may do the same thing in order to introduce people's democracy.'<sup>6</sup> Some major ideas and ideals are, however, commonly accepted throughout. The abolition of feudalism has been recognised as the major objective of land reform. Both in American thinking and in Marxist doctrine feudalism remains a central conceptual tool to understand various aspects of socio-economic developments in historical perspective. The classical model of European feudalism is not actually found everywhere but its essential features in the economic, social and political order are observed in almost all historical societies. Feudalism in this wider sense, used by Mark Bloch and others, refers to the economic and social order in which villeins held land from the lord in hereditary tenure, with the obligation of working 'labour days' on the lord's demesne, and paying rent in produce. There was an element of mutual obligation in that the lord offered protection to the villeins in return for their services, and the villeins shared in the decisions of the man or court.<sup>7</sup> Such a patron-client relationship has existed in the agrarian social structure of a large number of underdeveloped countries. 'So governments which claim to be

abolishing feudalism are justified in making the claim. As a motive for action, the phrase has value and meaning because it focuses attention on creating a free and more equal society by removing oppressive concentrations of economic and political power; it treats land redistribution as an historical turning point, which indeed it may prove to be.<sup>8</sup>

Another motivation, Warriner suggests, is nationalism. The achievement of national independence has often been associated with the removal of institutional hangovers from the past, which may include the ownership of large estates by persons of alien nationality or the survival of forms of land tenure imposed under colonial rule.<sup>9</sup> The situation prevailing in the Balkans through the nineteenth century led to the reform of the old Turkish system through the war of national independence. In the reforms of the inter-war period, the new states of Central and Eastern Europe expropriated Austrian and Hungarian magnates under the same nationalist impetus. A large number of countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America gained independence in the post-Second World War period and launched programmes of national reconstruction. Under the circumstances, attempts were made to attack colonial arrangements of land. The abolition of zamindari in India is an outstanding case. Zamindari, a form of tenure systematised under British rule, became a symbol of colonial exploitation and a target of nationalist attack. Therefore, its abolition became the goal of the first phase of land reform measures after independence. Zamindars were regarded as collaborators with the former colonial regime and, therefore, the people pressed for their expropriation.

Social justice and economic equality are other considerations behind land reform. The ideal of equality has become part of popular consciousness in the modern world. It is essentially so in the democratic environment created throughout the world after the Second World War. Particularly in a traditionally hierarchical society, which was founded on the principle of inequality, the introduction of the tenet of equality is a revolutionary force challenging the ideological and institutional framework of social existence. It is the creator of new urges and aspirations among the deprived people and therefore, the generator of social forces necessitating far-reaching innovations in the institutional pattern and path of modernisation. If the principle of equality—and equality

also subsumes the elimination of worst forms of social parasitism and poverty, has to be a major premise of economic growth, it brings to the forefront the question of new institutional patterns contributing to growth with equality.<sup>10</sup> This ideology of equity has been articulated in terms of programmes for institutional innovations.

The principle of equality has received fillip from the urge for democracy as a major force of the contemporary period. The idea of people's power has become a moving force of all political power. The goal of equality and justice can be achieved only under a democratic polity. Thus countries such as India have incorporated some basic provisions of equity and democracy in the constitution itself. The practice of one-man one-vote, the provision of rights of protest, the principle of a free press, an independent judiciary, multi-party system, the existence of trade unions and peasant organisation—all these constitute the framework of a democratic polity.<sup>11</sup> By making provisions for all these elements of democratic order, the notion of social and economic equality no longer remains an ideological force alone but helps the poor and deprived masses to articulate their grievances. That being the case, an environment for reforms is created.

Joshi has made a distinction between 'land reform as ideology' and 'land reform as programme' to show that the ideological basis of the new political regime in India has shifted from the principle of inequality to that of equality.<sup>12</sup> The ideology of land reform is generally anti-landlord and represents an articulation of general peasant interests. The ruling elites talk of the interests of the peasantry as a whole. But the programme of land reform serves primarily the interests of the superior tenants and under proprietors rather than the interests of the rural poor.

Joshi remarks:

Land reform, especially in India, has been characterised at the ideological level by agrarian radicalism, giving rise to great expectations on the part of the rural poor. At the programmatic level, however, land reform has only tended to promote and consolidate the interests of the intermediate class of big peasants and medium landowners. The land reform programme thus has had a dual impact. Benefiting mainly intermediate classes, it has left unsatisfied the vast

expectations of the rural poor. The former have been upgraded and pushed into prominence in the land and power structure. The latter have, in contrast, lost even the limited security, which they enjoyed under the old system without yet, a tangible gain in any other form.<sup>13</sup>

Land reform has often been discussed in relation to agricultural production. How does it affect production? How to reform a land system in such a way as to increase production? As a matter of fact, it is not a condition of agricultural efficiency that sharecroppers, agricultural labourers and small peasants should be kept in a state of subjugation and control. Land systems, which do this, are not efficient; and precisely because they are not, they need to be reformed for the sake of increasing productivity as well as for the sake of redistributing incomes.<sup>14</sup> Warriner emphatically points out:

It is fairly easy to show, in any given situation, that the existing structure does not favour increased production, because its defects seem obvious, though it is often doubtful whether they are effects or causes of inefficiency in the use of land and labour. It is far more difficult to decide on the kinds of structure, which should replace these defective systems. Most of the arguments commonly advanced for and against land reform are hangovers from the past. Frequently they are derived from generalisation from the past history of advanced countries, i.e. from a limited though verifiable experience; or from old ideological doctrines which experience has not verified. They are not based, that is to say, on the conditions actually existing in underdeveloped countries today, and so do not take account of the effects of shortage of capital, increasing population, unstable yields and prices. It is against this contemporary background that the traditional arguments need to be reconsidered, when we come down to the question of what sort of agrarian structure would work better in countries as diverse as India, Iraq, and Brazil.<sup>15</sup>

### **Land Reforms in India: The Contextual Factors**

Analysing the main processes and motivation of agrarian change in India scholars have taken conflicting stands. While Joshi<sup>16</sup>

attributes agrarian change to 'elite sponsored land reform'; Das<sup>17</sup> considers it as a 'response to longdrawn out and militant peasant struggles'.

Joshi states:

"...agrarian change in India ... is only partly a spontaneous and natural process ... it is the result of various socio-economic programmes, including land reform introduced by ruling elites which took over the reigns of political power on the termination of British rule."<sup>18</sup> It has been argued that not only in India but in the entire Asian region itself the commitment to land reform is common to the ruling elites. In fact, it is 'independent of the differences either in the social character of the ruling elites or in the form of political regime.' In the beginning, the strategy was to win peasant support for the anti-British struggle but subsequently for gaining political legitimacy for the new regime after independence. During colonial rule, the gulf between the landed and the landless was so wide that a vast economic and social distance existed between the two classes. Under the circumstances, the agrarian system was the main promoter of economic justice. The ruling elite were conscious of this situation and recognised its significance in the changed political scenario.<sup>19</sup>

Disagreeing with the above formulation, Das strongly argues that "to attribute agrarian change to 'elite-sponsored land reform' is grossly erroneous and amounts indeed to a cruel joke on the people actually involved in the process of bringing about that change."<sup>20</sup> What Joshi calls 'agrarian change from above' was not even a process started and sponsored by the elite. Such an agrarian change, Das shows was a response of the elites to militant peasant struggles either in the specific area or those, which occurred elsewhere, having more than just a local impact. Both the zamindari abolition undertaken by the state and the Bhoodan movement by the Gandhians were responses to peasant unrest and discontent. While the former was demanded by the powerful Kisan Sabha, the latter was launched to counteract the militant communist led peasant insurrection in Telengana.<sup>21</sup> It is further suggested that the peasants in different settings were 'trying to bring about agrarian change spontaneously as well as through

consciously organised movements dealing with specific issues and situations'. Such an analysis of agrarian condition is 'the acknowledgement of the subaltern as the maker of his own history and the architect of his own destiny'. As such it rejects 'academic elitism' which has been a strong trend in the corpus of historical writings on peasant movements and agrarian change.

It is obvious that there are several contextual factors which effect change in agrarian structure. Change is not a unidirectional process and agrarian change is not an exception to this rule. Seen from this perspective, land reform in India had its initiation both through political factors as well as through the organised mobilisation of the peasantry. The political factors associated first with British rule and later with the growth of nationalism created a situation in which undertaking measures for land reform became a compulsion for the ruling elites. Some agrarian legislation that attempted to protect the rights of tenants dates back to the middle of the nineteenth century. Several nationalist writers during the 1920s and 1930s also placed responsibility on the British Raj for the pitiable condition of Indian agriculture. It was effectively argued that the British had 'saddled the Indian peasantry with a host of functionless intermediaries whom they characterised as outmoded vestiges of feudalism.'

The poverty of the people and extreme exploitation of the peasantry by intermediaries, moneylenders and officials attracted the attention of political leaders during the freedom struggle. It became an important plank of the programme of the Indian National Congress. A major programme of agrarian reform was presented at the Faizpur Session of the Congress in 1936 at Nehru's initiative and Gandhiji's approval and became part of the Congress manifesto for the 1937 elections. In his presidential address Nehru asked for the "removal of intermediaries between the cultivator and state" after which "cooperative or collective farming must follow."<sup>22</sup>

Almost at the same time the *All India Kisan Sabha* under the presidentship of N.G. Ranga drafted a *All India Kisan Manifesto* in its meeting held at Lucknow in 1936 articulating the demands of small landowners, tenants and landless labourers. The major demands included abolition of zamindari tenures without compensation, abolition of all debts, redistribution of cultivable waste lands to subsistence farmers and landless labourers, graduated

income tax in raiyatwari areas with exemption for all families earning less than Rs. 500 annually, occupancy rights for tenants, cheap credit, seeds, fertilizers, establishment of marketing cooperatives to eliminate traders and return of community grazing land to village councils.

In November 1947 at the Jaipur meeting of the All India Congress Committee, the *Committee on Objectives and Economic Programme* defined the general principle that "land with its mineral resources and other means of production must belong to and be regulated by a community in its own interests." It further recommended elimination of all intermediary tenures, an end to all forms of tenancy, a ceiling on personal ownership of land, elimination of all private moneylenders and traders and for formation of village credit, marketing and processing societies based on the compulsory membership of all cultivators.

The most decisive stage, however, came when on the unanimous suggestion of the Revenue Ministers' Conference held in Delhi in December 1947, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the then Congress President, appointed an *Agrarian Reforms Committee*. This *Congress Agrarian Reforms Committee* under the Chairmanship of Shri J.C. Kumarappa presented an analysis of the agrarian problem in India and also a programme of land reforms. It became an important policy document that provided guidelines for the government. The Committee categorically declared:

'... there cannot be any lasting improvement in agricultural production and efficiency without comprehensive reforms in the country's land system ...The Committee is strongly of the opinion that in the agrarian economy of India there is no place for intermediaries and land must belong to the tiller....'<sup>23</sup>

The Committee kept before itself the following main principles that should govern the agrarian policy of the country:<sup>24</sup>

- (a) The agrarian economy should provide opportunity for the development of individual's personality.
- (b) There should be no exploitation.
- (c) There should be maximum efficiency of production.
- (d) The scheme of agrarian reforms should be practicable.

Thus, the thrust of the policy was that there was no room for intermediaries and the tiller of the soil must own the land. In the

context of the pre-independence agrarian structure, this was the most radical approach which could be adopted by the government. Other aspects of the agrarian structure such as the size of a landholding, rights in land, land management and indebtedness of the peasantry also figured in the Report. These reforms were regarded as crucial not only from the point of view of increasing agricultural production and eliminating exploitation of the peasantry but also for ushering in an era of a just and egalitarian society.

Another development on the political front during the same period was the adoption of a new political thesis by the Communist Party of India in 1948. It raised the slogan of 'land to the tiller' and recognised the strategy of militant mobilisation of the peasants for an agrarian revolution. This basic idea was further developed in a major policy document entitled *On the Agrarian Question in India*.<sup>25</sup>

The well-known Bhoodan-Gramdan movement under the stewardship of Vinoba Bhave was also launched only two years later but discussions about it were initiated in 1948 itself, after the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi.

Although the above ideas and programmes belonged to diverse ideological positions, their underlying motivations were the same. All of them were in support of land reforms. Thus, the promise of land reform assumed the shape of a political strategy for acquiring power. Such political pressure created a favourable climate for generating serious debates on the need to transform outmoded agrarian relations.

Moreover, the pressure was simultaneously being built by the longdrawn struggles of peasants launched during the pre-independence days. The Moplah rebellions between 1833 and 1921 in south India were essentially an expression of the age-old agrarian conflicts and they were mainly a response to the radical changes introduced to the agricultural economy of Malabar district by the British administration.<sup>26</sup> The anti-planter protest of Champaran in Bihar initiated in 1917 against the white indigo planters was another major peasant resistance in the country. The woes and oppression of the raiyats under the planters had crossed all limits that finally brought Mahatma Gandhi on the scene in 1917-18 and produced significant results.<sup>27</sup>

Several other peasant agitations were witnessed during the first half of the twentieth century. Agrarian agitations during 1920–22 and 1930–32 in Oudh, a region of twelve districts in Uttar Pradesh, drew their strength primarily from the middle and rich peasants leaving the poor peasants alienated.<sup>28</sup> The peasants in the district of Pratapgarh revolted on the issues of *nazrana* (presents) and *bedakhli* (ejections). This movement developed in the context of the iniquitous tenurial system of *taluqdari* and thus it was the reaction against the feudal agrarian structure, which permanently oppressed the peasantry.

Peasants in other parts of north India were equally restive. Between 1920 and 1946 several peasant organisations emerged in Bengal and Bihar which articulated the grievances of the middle and poor peasants.<sup>29</sup> The *Kisan Sabha* movement led by Swami Sahajanand Saraswati struggled to ameliorate the conditions of peasants in the zamindari estates of Bihar and demanded the abolition of zamindari. The struggle was launched on mass lines as its ideology, organisation and forms moved towards mass politics assuming communist characteristics.

Gandhi and his followers were able to launch two protest movements in Gujarat; first the Kheda agitation in 1918 and secondly the 'non-tax' campaign in Bardoli in 1921 as part of the nationwide non-cooperation movement. The Bardoli satyagrah of 1928 was another agrarian agitation, which began on the issue of the method of revenue assessment and revision. It was essentially a movement of the rich and middle peasant class but a successful alliance was also established with poor sections of the peasantry. The Bardoli movement thus symbolised an agrarian class alliance against the government, but the co-operative endeavour was encouraged only in so far as it did not give rise to consciousness along class lines, and to the extent that it did not disturb the traditional social structure.<sup>30</sup>

The *Tebhaga* movement of 1946–47 in Bengal and the peasant revolt in Telengana were two other famous left-wing peasant struggles in India. Before the *Tebhaga* movement stirred the whole of Bengal two other agitations were organised by the *Kisan Sabha*: the Canal Cess Movement (*Canal Kar Andolan*) and the Hatatola agitation both of which took place about the same time in 1939 but they were localised and failed to make any appreciable impact. The *Tebhaga* peasant struggle was definitely the most

effectively organised of all agitations launched by peasants in Bengal during pre-independence days. It was an agitation of sharecroppers to retain two-thirds share of the produce for themselves.<sup>31</sup> The movement was the outcome of the politicisation of the peasantry which was made possible because of the Communist Party of India and the *Kisan Sabha*.

The Telengana peasant revolt which occurred on the eve of India's independence has been, by far, the most significant peasant movement launched by the CPI.<sup>32</sup> The insurrection which started in the middle of 1946 lasted for five years till it was called off in October 1951. It developed in the Nizam-governed feudal Hyderabad State and as many as 4,000 communists and peasant militants were killed and about 10,000 persons were thrown into detention camps and jails.<sup>33</sup> It is difficult to assess the success and failure of a movement but its nature and direction may be identified without much of a difficulty. Evaluating the Telengana struggle Dhanagare writes:

If seizure of power for a considerable period of time is taken as the touchstone of success then, perhaps, no other peasant revolt or movement in India was more successful than the one in Telengana. If, however, a lasting dent in the agrarian structure and change in the conditions of its principal participants are viewed as the criterion, then the Telengana insurrection was no more successful than other peasant resistance movements in India.<sup>34</sup>

It is obvious from the foregoing discussion that agrarian discontent and grievances permeated almost all parts of the country. These grievances were expressed in widespread tenant-landlord conflicts. But these struggles and movements, if seen in the context of their goals, produced positive results. The pressure created by long-drawn struggles compelled the government to work out plans for the immediate redressal of the grievances of peasants. In this sense, peasant revolts in India during the period extending over more than half a century before independence assume historical importance for the new era of progressive land reforms that began just after independence. This dimension of the problem was recognised even by the official agencies and committees. An explicit reference to the agrarian discontent as a factor in expediting legislative action for agrarian reform was made in the

*Report of the United Provinces Zamindari Abolition Committee.*  
The Report says: ‘

The age-long simmering discontent occasionally bursting into acts of open defiance and sometimes of violence in our province and other parts of India has reached a critical stage. Whatever forbearance and self-restraint we find in the countryside among the tenants is due to the hope that those who are running the state will undo the wrong done to them. Once that hope is gone the tenant will be driven to desperation. The discontent may develop into open revolt and our social security may be threatened by the outbreak of violence. Our scheme of zamindari abolition contemplates payment of compensation. If abolition is held over for a few years, abolition may mean appropriation without compensation and, quite possibly, bloodshed and violence... One can only hope that the landed gentry is not blind to the writing on the wall.<sup>35</sup>

Changes in agrarian structure have thus been caused not by one factor alone but by sets of factors. While some changes may be regulated through government actions, others may be executed by non-governmental agencies. Some may bring about intended consequences, others may result into unintended and undesirable effects. That being the case, several patterns of bringing agrarian transformation may be observed in different settings. However, four different directions are found in India after independence, which have been identified thus:

- (a) Land reform ‘from above’ through land legislation on the lines broadly indicated by the Central government, enacted by the state legislatures, and finally, implemented by agencies of the State governments.
- (b) Land reform through militant peasant action ‘from below’ as in the case mainly of Telengana and Naxalbari movements and also to some extent in the case of the ‘land grab’ movement.
- (c) Land reform through legislative enactment ‘from above’ combined with peasant mobilisation ‘from below’ as in the ‘controlled land seizure’ in West Bengal under the United Front regime and of protection of poor peasants in Kerala under the Congress-supported CPI ministry.

- (d) Land reform 'from below' through persuasion of landlords and peaceful pressure by peasants as in the case of Bhoodan and Gramdan.<sup>36</sup>

It can easily be ascertained from the above that the nature and degree of role-played by these forms of action for land reforms is not uniform throughout the country. In some areas, it is government action, which has contributed significantly, while in others, non-government political forms of action has been a dominant trend. These actions are however not isolated from each other. They are interdependent and complementary as well. In fact, as Joshi says, "this dynamic interaction and interdependence of legislative and non-legislative forms of action for land reforms can in its totality be identified and characterised as the emerging Indian model of land reforms and agrarian transformation on the basis of Indian experience...."<sup>37</sup>

It is pertinent to note that whether it was the Nehruvian model of growth with social justice and democratisation, the Bhoodan-Gramdan approach based on the tenet of the landowners' wider social responsibility, or the leftists' stand of a broad based ownership pattern, there was a broad consensus on the objective of land reform for giving ownership to the tiller. A comprehensive land reforms policy thus evolved revolving around the following areas:

- (a) abolition of intermediaries and bringing tenants in direct contact with the government;
- (b) tenancy reforms with a view to providing security to actual cultivators of land against eviction;
- (c) redistribution of land by imposition of ceiling on agricultural holdings;
- (d) consolidation of holdings; and
- (e) updating of land records.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

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11. *Ibid.*
12. *Ibid.*, p. 53.
13. P.C. Joshi, "Land Reforms and Agrarian Change in India and Pakistan since 1947", in Ratna Dutta & P.C. Joshi (eds.), *Studies in Asian Social Development*, No. 1, Tata McGraw-Hill Publishing Co. Ltd., Bombay, 1971, p. 59.
14. Warriner, *op. cit.*
15. *Ibid.*, p. 29.
16. Joshi, *op. cit.*, 1971, p. 6.
17. Arvind N. Das, "Agrarian Change from Above and Below: Bihar 1947-78", in Ranajit Guha (ed.), *Subaltern Studies II*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1983, pp. 180-227.
18. Joshi, *op. cit.*, 1971, p. 6.
19. "The ruling elites were aware that the idea of equality", Joshi says, "was fast becoming a part of the consciousness of the exploited classes and, consequently, an economic and social order which tended to perpetuate rather than remove social injustice would not answer the needs of the times; it would not be tolerated by the masses. It would not only promote social tension but also give birth to violent movements led by extremist political forces. These were the considerations, which lay behind the emphasis placed by ruling elites on combining economic development with social justice. Land reform was regarded as fundamental both for economic development and for social justice."
20. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
21. Das, *op. cit.*, p.180.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 181.
23. Faizpur Session of Congress, 1936, December 27-28, see *The Encyclopaedia of the Indian National Congress*, Vol. 11, 1936-1938, p. 181.
24. *Report of the Congress Agrarian Reforms Committee*, The All India Congress Committee, New Delhi, 1949, p. 7.
25. *Ibid.*
26. Communist Party of India, *On the Agrarian Question in India*, People's Publishing House, Bombay, 1949 (quoted in Joshi, *op. cit.*, 1975).
27. D.N. Dhanagare, *Peasant Movements in India 1920-1950*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1983, pp. 54-87.
28. See Girish Mishra, "Socio-Economic Background of Gandhi's Champaran Movement", *Indian Economic and Social History Review* Vol. II, No. 3, 1968; 245-275; S.K. Mittal, *Peasant Uprising and Mahatma Gandhi in North Bihar*. Anu Publication, Meerut, 1978; Stephen Henningham, "The Social Setting of the Champaran Satyagrah: The Challenge to an

- Alien Elite", *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. XIII, No. 1, 1976, 159-75.
29. D.N. Dhanagare, "Congress and the Agrarian Agitations in Oudh, 1920-32", *South Asia*, 5, 1975, pp. 67-77; Govind S. Kelkar, "Kisan Unrest and Congress in Uttar Pradesh, 1920-22", *Economic and Political Weekly*, X, 52, December 22, 1975, pp. 1967-94; and M.H. Siddiqui, "The Peasant Movement in Pratapgarh, 1920", *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, IX, 3, 1972, pp. 305-26.
  30. D.N. Dhanagare, "The Politics of Survival: Peasant Organisations and the Left-Wing in India, 1925-46", *Sociological Bulletin*, 24, (1), p. 1975; B.B. Chaudhuri, "Agrarian Movements in Bengal and Bihar 1919-1939", in *Socialism in India*, B.R. Nanda (ed.), Vikas Publications, Delhi, 1972; Rakesh Gupta, *Bihar Peasantry and the Kisan Sabha*, People's Publishing House, New Delhi, 1982.
  31. D.N. Dhanagare, *op. cit.*, 1983, pp. 88-110.
  32. Andre Beteille, "Peasant Associations and Class Structure", in *Studies in Agrarian Social Structure*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1974; S. Sen, *Agrarian Struggle in Bengal, 1946-47*, People's Publishing House, New Delhi, 1974; D.N. Dhanagare, "Peasant Protest and Politics—The Tebhaga Movement in Bengal (India) 1946-47", *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 3(3), 1976, pp. 360-78.
  33. P. Sundarayya, *Telengana People's Struggle and its Lessons*, CPI (M), Calcutta, 1972; D.N. Dhanagare, "Social Origins of the Peasant Insurrection in Telegana (1946-51)", *Contributions to Indian Sociology (NE)*, 8, 1974, pp. 109-134.
  34. Dhanagare, *op. cit.*, 1983, p. 207.
  35. *The Report of the United Provinces Zamindari Abolition Committee*, Vol. I, 1948, p. 358 (quoted in Joshi, *op. cit.*, 1971).
  36. Joshi, *op. cit.*, 1975, pp. 88-89.
  37. *Ibid.*, p. 91.