CHAPTER – II
Chapter II

Agriculture and Nationalist Demands in the Central Legislature

Strength lies in absence of fear, not in the quantity of flesh and muscle we may have on our bodies.1

-M.K. Gandhi, 1908

In coming to the actual distress of the agriculturists, we find that they are being crushed unto death by starvation due to their heavy indebtedness on the one hand and to their not being able to realize even the cost prices of their produce on the other. On the top of it, they are to pay their dues to Government and the landholders as well.2

-Bhupat Singh, 1934

Even before the Revolt of 1857 was suppressed, a Bill introduced in the British Parliament sought to transfer power from the East India Company to the British Crown. Consequently, now the highest authority in colonial India was the Governor-General, commonly called the Viceroy after the Queen’s Proclamation of 1 November 1858. The Crown on the advice of the Prime Minister appointed him. He was to report all matters to the Secretary of State for India.* In effect, now Queen Victoria directly governed India through a Secretary of State in Council. The Council of India consisted of 15 members, eight nominated by the Crown and seven by the Court of Directors initially. This Council was only a consultative body with a limited power of veto. The Secretary of State, as a member of the Cabinet, was of course responsible to the British Parliament. Subject to this, he was a virtual despot as far as the governance of India was concerned. Under the then existing arrangement, the Executive Council of the Governor-General enlarged by the addition of six other members, known as ‘Additional Members’ for the purpose of enactment of laws. This enlarged body with the total strength of twelve was commonly called the ‘Legislative Council of India’ although it had no such designation in law. Unlike the British Parliament, it was not a representative body since the members were

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1 M.K.Gandhi, Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule(1908), Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1938, 38.
2 Mr. Bhupat Singh (Bihar and Orissa: Landholders) speaking on the Resolution Re Committee of Enquiry on Agricultural Distress, Legislative Assembly Debates (hereafter LAD), 6.4.1934, 3294.
* The head of the British government in India after 1858 had a dual title and office. As Governor-General, he was responsible ultimately, to the parliament and as ‘viceroy’, he represented the monarch and her relationship to the princes and peoples of India. - Bernard S. Cohn, ‘Representing Authority in Victorian India’, An Anthropologist among the Historians and Other Essays, OUP, Delhi, 1987, 634-5.
either ex-officio or nominated. It merely enacted into law the regulations brought before it. The above policy remained the corner stone of British raj in India.

Bicameral Legislature

The Government of India Act of 1919 that gave effect to the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms established a bicameral legislature at the Centre for the first time and introduced some elements of responsible form of government in the provinces in placation of the nationalist demands. The India Legislature was to consist of the Governor-General and the two Houses – the Council of State and the Legislative Assembly. The Upper House, named Council of State, was to have a maximum of 60 members. Of these, a not less than half were to be elected and not more than one-third could be officials. The Lower House, named the Legislative Assembly, was to have a strength of 144 of whom at least five-sevenths were to be elected and at least one-third of the remaining (nominated) were to be non-officials. Thus, there was a majority of elected members in both Houses. Each of the two Houses was to be presided over by a President. The 1919 Act while establishing partially responsible government in the provinces under a system of what came to be known popularly as ‘dyarchy’, did not introduce any element of responsibility at the Centre and the Governor-General-in-council continued to remain responsible only to the Secretary of State for India and through him to the British Parliament. The Central Legislature under the Act of 1919 was still only ‘an advisory body’ or at best a non-sovereign law-making body. It was powerless before the executive in all spheres of governmental activity- administrative as well as legislative and financial.  

4 Ibid.

According to the dyarchical system, certain departments like education, local self-government, public health, public works, agriculture and co-operative societies were “transferred” for administration to Ministers who were to be elected members of the provincial legislatures and to which they were responsible, while the departments of land revenue, law, justice, the police, irrigation, labour and finance were reserved for administration by Executive Councillors responsible to the Provincial governors but not to the legislatures. This dyarchical system was meant to teach the Indians the art of administration by stages and it was certainly a reflection on their capacity to rule themselves. Moreover, the transferred departments were all spending branches of the administration while the reserved departments were the revenue-making ones. Such an allocation naturally put the Ministers at a great disadvantage in comparison with the Councillors whose co-operation became essential for them. In fact, the whole system smacked of a probationary nature and never became popular with the Indians. But the British Government found it a very convenient method of keeping the control of the more important departments in the hands of Councillors.

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4 Ibid.
enactment of the Government of India Act of 1935, the Constitution of the Central Government in India by and large remained what it was under the Act of 1919, since the federal part of the 1935 Constitution never came into operation; only some modifications in practice and procedure, as necessitated by the introduction of 'autonomy' in the Provinces were made.\(^6\) Thus the 1935 Act marked little advance over 1919, except in the provinces where provincial autonomy-theoretically in all departments- replaced dyarchy. The Federal part did not come into effect as none of the parties concerned-the British Government, the Princes, the Muslim League, the Congress, etc- was keen on its implementation, though each for different reasons. Put simply, the 1935 Act provided for the establishment of autonomous Governments in the provinces with certain essential safeguards vested in the Governors and for an all-India federation of autonomous provinces and States with a responsible Federal Government, except in the Departments of Defence and External Affairs, which were reserved to the control of the Governor-General. The latter was vested with special responsibilities in such matters as the prevention of grave menace to the peace and tranquillity of India, the safeguarding of the financial stability and credit of the Federal Government and the safeguarding of the legitimate rights of the minorities.\(^7\) Under section 65(1) of the Government of India Act, 1919, the Central Legislature was empowered to make laws for the whole of British India, for British subjects and servants of the Crown in India, and for all British Indian subjects within as well as outside British India. In all, the Legislative Assembly and the Council of State set up under this functioned for over quarter of a century from 1921 to 1947. Though the Central Legislature under the 1919 Act was conceived primarily as a law-making body its freedom to do so was circumscribed and limited in many ways.\(^8\)

\(^6\) Manoranjan Jha, op.cit.
\(^7\) India in 1934-35, A statement prepared for presentation to Parliament in accordance with the requirements of the 26th Section of the Government of India Act (3 & 6 Geo. V, Chap.61). Anmol Publications, Delhi, (Reprint), 1985, 106.
\(^8\) Subhash C. Kashyap, op.cit.
But, the position of the Legislature was most flagrantly undermined when the Governor-General certified several of the Bills rejected by the Legislature. Also, the issue of the large number of ordinances amounted to side-tracking of the Legislature. During 1940-45, there was one ordinance every ten days. Some of the ordinances were very drastic and repressive in nature.\textsuperscript{9} With the elections to the two Houses of the Indian Legislature held under the 1919 Act for the first time in November 1920, the new legislature was inaugurated on 9 February 1921.\textsuperscript{10} Only the First and the Second Assemblies were dissolved within their life term of three years. The life of the Third, Fourth and the Fifth Assemblies was extended beyond their normal terms. The Fifth Assembly had the longest inning of ten years because elections could not be held due to World War II. The Sixth Assembly (1946-1947) was, in fact, not dissolved but automatically ceased to exist on 14 August 1947 under section 8 of the Indian Independence Act, 1947.\textsuperscript{11} Before 1921, the Governor-General presided over the sittings of the unicameral Legislature called the Legislative Council. The Joint Select Committee of the British Parliament on the Government of India Bill, 1919 recommended that the first President of the Central Legislative Assembly ‘should have a tenure of four years and the person appointed to this office should possess experience in the working of the House of Commons’. Accordingly, a former member of the British House of Commons, Sir Frederick Whyte was nominated by the Governor-General as the first President (Speaker) of the Assembly in 1921 for a period of four years (1921-1925). While in the case of the Council of State, the President continued to be nominated by the Governor-General even after 1925, all Presidents of the Legislative Assembly after Sir Frederick Whyte were elected by the Assembly. On 22 August 1925, Vithalbhai Patel became the first Indian President of the Assembly, supported by the Swarajists and elected by a narrow margin of two votes against very stiff opposition presented by the officially sponsored candidate, Diwan Bahadur T. Rangachariar. During his two terms of office (1925-1930), Patel repeatedly asserted the unique position of the Chair-its independence and impartiality—and in many

\textsuperscript{9} Subhash C. Kashyap, op.cit.
\textsuperscript{10} Subhash C. Kashyap, op.cit.
\textsuperscript{11} Subhash C. Kashyap, op.cit.
ways added to the dignity of the House.* Maulavi Muhammad Yakub succeeded Vithalbhai Patel as the President of the Assembly on 9 July 1930. He was, however, in position only for a few days, viz. 9 July to 31 July 1930. After the General elections, Sir Ibrahim Rahimtoola took over as the President of the Assembly on 17 January 1931, and occupied the office until 7 March 1933, when he resigned on health grounds. R.K. Shanmukham Chetty was elected unanimously to succeed him. He took over the office of President of the Assembly on 14 March 1933. In January 1935, yet another contested election took place for the office of the President of the Assembly. The Independent Party candidate Sir Abdul Rahim followed President Chetty to the Chair in 1935 defeating the Congress candidate T.A.K. Sherwani by 70 votes to 62. Sir Abdul Rahim was in office from 24 January 1935 to 10 October 1945. After the elections to the Sixth Central Legislative Assembly (1946-1947), on 23 January 1946, G.V. Mavalankar was elected as the President by a narrow margin of three votes defeating Cowasji Jahangir. Mavalankar continued to occupy the position until the last day of the Assembly, 14 August 1947.

From now, the Constituent Assembly of India took over the functions of the Central Legislature.12

The two Houses had coordinate powers, the only exception being that the granting or withholding of supply was the exclusive preserve of the Assembly. The summoning of the two chambers was the responsibility of the Governor-General. Even though the 1919 Act did not specify the number of sessions to be held, in practice two sessions were held each year—the first session in Delhi (January/February –March/April), the second in

* Following the historic incident of Sardar Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt throwing two bombs into the Assembly Chamber on 8 April 1929, a major controversy arose between the Government represented by the Home Member and President Patel in the matter of the control of the precincts of the Central Legislature. President Patel asserted his authority. The President of the Assembly had full control over the security staff for the inner precincts. This incidentally was the beginning of the institution of the Watch and Ward organization for Parliament House.

12 Subhash C. Kashyap, op.cit.

Simla* (August-October). From 1940, no session was held in Simla; the second session of the year was also held in Delhi. In the first week of each session, the Governor-General generally addressed a joint session of the two Houses.\textsuperscript{13} The quorum to constitute a sitting of the Assembly was 25. During 1930 - 1933, the Assembly had to be adjourned for lack of quorum only thrice. In later years, particularly during 1940-1943 when Congress boycotted the Assembly and its members absented themselves, adjournments were somewhat more frequent.\textsuperscript{14} At the first meeting of the Constituent Assembly held in the Constitution Hall (the present Central Hall of Parliament House) on 9 December 1946 at Eleven of the Clock in the morning, Dr. Sachchidanand Sinha was invited to be the temporary Chairman of the Assembly, following the French precedent of appointing the oldest member (the president de age) to the post. On 11 December, Dr. Rajendra Prasad was elected as the permanent Chairman (President).\textsuperscript{15} The Constituent Assembly of India continued till 24 January 1950. The Constitution of India was finally adopted on 26 November 1949 and signed by the Members of the Assembly on 24 January 1950. Thereafter, the Constituent Assembly having accomplished the task of framing the Constitution assigned to it adjourned sine die and became functus officio.\textsuperscript{16} In accordance with the scheme announced by the Viceroy Lord Mountbatten on 3 June 1947, the country was divided into two independent dominions – India and Pakistan. The Indian Independence Act, 1947, passed by the British Parliament, declared the Constituent Assembly of India to be a fully sovereign body, and on the midnight of 14-15 August

\* Hill station of Simla, 7200 feet up in the Himalayan foothills was adopted by the British in 1832, when the Governor General started coming every summer for its fresh Alpine climate, days away from the heat and humidity of Calcutta. It became the official summer capital of India. Here, among thick forests of deodar trees, meadows blossoming with wild flowers and spectacular views to the snow-capped high Himalayas, the British built a fantastical vision of home. Soon the crags were dotted with precariously situated Scottish baronial castles and half-timbered Tudor cottages. The British continued to come to Simla, sometimes for eight months of each year, with the European carried up in the local jhampan sedan chairs. Eventually, in 1891, a narrow-gauge railway was opened, weaving in and out of 103 tunnels up from the plains of Kalka – a journey which still took at least six hours. Mahatma Gandhi criticized the administration’s annual repair to Simla for being ‘government working from the 500th floor’, but that was exactly the point. – Alex Von Tunzelmann, Indian Summer, The Secret History of the End of an Empire, Simon & Schuster, London, 2007, 187-8.

\textsuperscript{13} Subhash C. Kashyap, op.cit.

\textsuperscript{14} Subhash C. Kashyap, op.cit.

\textsuperscript{15} Subhash C. Kashyap, op.cit.

\textsuperscript{16} ‘Preface’ to the Constituent Assembly Debates, 9.12.1946 to 23.12.1946, Official Report, Volume I, Reprinted by Lok Sabha Secretariat, New Delhi. The Constituent Assembly Debates for the period December 9, 1946 to January 24, 1950 were printed in 1950. These comprised twelve volumes with an index. The Lok Sabha Secretariat reprinted the Debates in 1966. The reprint was quickly sold out.
1947, the Assembly assumed full powers for the governance of the country. Apart from being a Constitution-making body, it was to function as the Dominion Legislature as well. In 1948 the functions of legislature were entrusted to "Constituent Assembly (Legislative)" which met as a separate body presided over by a Speaker. Only one nomination, that of G.V. Mavalankar, having been received for the office of the Speaker, he was declared duly elected. Dr. Rajendra Prasad vacated the Chair which was then occupied by Speaker Mavalankar. The same day, he observed, *inter alia*, that the Bills which, immediately before the establishment of the Dominion, were pending in the old Legislative Assembly were being continued in the Constituent Assembly on its legislative side, under statutory provisions contained in section 30 of the Government of India Act, 1935 as adapted. Thus, on the functions of the Constituent Assembly under the Indian Independence Act, the Constituent Assembly resolved that the business of the Assembly as a Constitution making body should be clearly distinguished from its normal business as the dominion Legislature, and different days or separate sittings on the same day should be set apart for the two kinds of business. It was also decided to make suitable provision in the Rules of the Constituent assembly for the election of an officer to be designated the Speaker to preside over the deliberations of the assembly when functioning as the Dominion Legislature. The power of summoning the Assembly was to be vested in the President of the Constituent Assembly.\(^{17}\) With the coming into force of the republican Constitution of Independent India on 26 January 1950, a full-fledged parliamentary system of government with a modern institutional framework and all its other concomitants was established. The Constituent Assembly (9.12.1946-26.1.1950) became the Provisional Parliament of India (27.1.1950-16.4.1952) and functioned as such until the first General Election based on adult franchise was held in 1952 and Parliament was constituted under the provisions of the new Constitution.\(^{18}\) The first House of the People (called so up to Thursday, 13 May 1954; Lok Sabha w.e.f. Friday, 14 May 1954) constituted on 17 April 1952, held its first meeting on 13 May 1952 and was dissolved on 4 April 1957 having held its last session (the 15th session) from 18 to 28 March 1957.\(^*\)

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\(^{17}\) Subhash C. Kashyap, op.cit.


* The second Lok Sabha, constituted on 5 April 1957, held its sessions from 10 May 1957 to 31 March 1962.
National Will for Independence

Under the Act of 1935, the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League contested the 1937 elections, according to the Raja of Mahmudabad, "as two parts of the same army fighting a common enemy on two fronts." Thus, the 1937 election results afforded a powerful demonstration of the united national will for independence. The Indian National Congress did extremely well in the elections, winning 716 out of 1585 provincial assembly seats, with absolute majorities in five provinces out of eleven (Bihar, C.P., Madras, Orissa and U.P.) and a near majority in Bombay (86 out of 175). Official backing failed to save from utter rout loyalist landlord-based groups like the Nawab of Chhattari’s National Agriculturist Party in U.P. and the Justice Party in Madras. Even the poor showing in the Muslim constituencies (the Congress contested only 58 out of 482 reserved seats, and won 26) was somewhat counterbalanced by the evident failure of the Muslim League to make good its claim to be the sole representative of the Muslims. The League failed to win a single seat in the N.W.F.P. and could capture only 2 out of 84 reserved constituencies in the Punjab and 3 out of 33 in Sind. The Congress also won most scheduled caste seats, except in Bombay where Ambedkar’s Independent Labour Party captured 13 out of 15 seats reserved for Harijans. So over the major part of the country, the persecuted of yesterday became ministers, the new assemblies met to the strains of the Bande Mataram, and the national flag for which so many had faced lathis and bullets flew proudly over public buildings. In fact, notwithstanding the opposition of its Left Wing, the Congress, buckling under the pressure of its Right Wing, accepted office and formed Ministries in nine Provinces. Thus at the time Britain declared war on


20 R. Palme Dutt, _India Today_ (1947), Manisha, 1970, 520.


22 S.A.I. Tirmizi, ed, op.cit.
Germany in September 1939, even though the Central Government in Delhi was in the Viceroy’s hands, the Congress Party ministries were running the governments in eight out of eleven British provinces of India – they exercised authority over three-fourths of the population of British India and the territories they governed included the British-built port cities of Madras and Bombay; also Agra, Banaras, Patna, Lucknow, Ahmedabad and Nagpur and the Pathan stronghold of Peshawar on the Indian side of the Khyber Pass from where the British had played the Great Game to restrain Russian penetration into Central Asia. The nationalists took over power in these provinces after their triumph in the provincial elections of 1937 held under the new constitution for an All-India Federation introduced in 1935. This federal scheme provided for self-government at the provincial level and a bicameral legislature at the Centre in which both the eleven British provinces and the 350 princely states would be represented. The scheme was launched with the consent of M.A. Jinnah and the Muslim League. In the Federal Legislature the princes’ nominees – none elected, all appointed – were to occupy 110 out of 260 seats in the Upper Chamber and 125 out of 375 seats in the Lower House. Since the elected representatives from British India would belong to various, mutually antagonistic, political parties, the princes’ ‘battalions’, if they remained united, could hold the key to the formation and running of the Central Government. However, the Federal Legislature and thus the unitary scheme remained stillborn because the Indian princes did not accede to it. In the Legislative Assembly, out of 152 seats, the Indian National Congress contested 107 and won 98, that is 65 percent of the total and 92 percent of the seats it contested. In the rural constituencies the Congress secured 68 out of 75 seats, significantly a function of Kisan Sabha campaign efforts, of which the basic or long-term demands, accruing from agriculture, included the abolition of the zamindari system and the writing-off of agrarian debt. The immediate demands included the abolition of rent in

23 Narendra Singh Sarita, The Shadow of the Great Game, The Untold Story of India’s Partition, HarperCollins Publishers India, New Delhi, 2005, 35-6. Noted that India was divided into eleven provinces, ruled directly by the British, and 350 princely states controlled indirectly. By 1939, each British province had an elected legislature (on 14 per cent franchise) and the leader of the majority party ran the government and was called chief minister. The British governors of these provinces had the power to dismiss the ministries and assume control. Less than a dozen princely states were big enough to form viable units, although they lay interspersed with the territories of British provinces. About one hundred of them were of middling size, with annual revenues between US $ 1 million to 5 million at present (2005) value. Over two hundred were hardly bigger than Manhattan Island. An overwhelming majority could not possibly stand on their own.
kind, the exemption of uneconomic holdings from rent, the cancellation of arrears and the reduction of rent and canal dues by one half. Despite the opposition of the Congress and the zamindars to these positions in the 1930s, it is a matter of historical record that however weak its structural meanings, the first serious agriculture related reform legislated by the Congress Party governments after independence was in fact zamindari abolition.24

'Grow More Food' Campaign

It is recalled that all through the period of this study the food situation in India was difficult, also exacerbated by the Second World War, and the Bengal famine of 1943.25 There was also a serious threat of a total breakdown of her rationing system with the partition of the country in 1947. Therefore, although 'Agriculture' was a Provincial subject, the fundamental concern of India's central legislators was making India self-sufficient in the matter of food crop. They were concerned about the quantities of different food crops raised annually in British and Native India; desired to know the total actual consumption of those crops, and the requirements of those food crops for consumption by the population of British and Native India.26 They were worried whether the Indian population got food sufficient in quality and quantity for the building up of the body and preservation of health. Thus, a reading of the debates in the central legislative assembly during the period of our study reveals that the members often expressed their direct interest, anxiety and concern in several ways - including, for example, in such traditional but fundamental fields of agriculture as crops and cattle, fertilizer and fodder, weather and water, and the dread of famine or flood or pestilence - all bearing, in one way or another, on formulation of schemes and policies for solving the food problem of India.27 For these reasons, for instance, they earnestly desired that the publications of the Imperial Council of Agricultural Research and other publications of the Government of

25 If the Bengal famine demonstrated anything, it was that great human misery could exist despite above-normal years of food production. - Akhil Gupta, Postcolonial Developments, Agriculture in the Making of Modern India, Oxford, 1999, 58.
27 * Q. No. 169 Re. Solution of the Food Problem in India by Mr. Akhil Chandra Datta, LAD, 25.1.1937, 87.
India in regard to agriculture were supplied to all the vernacular papers in India so that they might publish relevant extracts from those publications for the benefit of the masses; although, agricultural publications which were not of technical nature were supplied free to many vernacular newspapers. The legislators' anxiety embraced concerns such as 'distribution of the waters of the Indus and its tributaries', 'methods for increasing the productivity of soil', 'deterioration of agricultural cattle', 'steps to improve the breed of agricultural cattle', 'experiment to manufacture cattle feed from molasses', 'use of Ayurvedic medicine for cattle', 'number of cattle, ploughs, etc., in India', 'cattle breeding farms', 'progress in the yield of food crops', 'import of agricultural tractors', 'steps for meeting deficiency of agricultural bullocks', 'requirements of agricultural implements and fertilisers', 'import of artificial manure', 'average production per acre of main crops in India', 'survey of sub-soil water for irrigation'.

34 Q. No. 143 Re Cattle, Ploughs, etc., in India by Bhai Parma Nand, LAD, 17.3.1941, Vol. II, 28 Feb-17 March 1941, 1527.
41 * Q. No. 759 Re Average Production Per Acre of Main Crops in India by Mr. B.P. Jhunjhunwala, LAD, 6.3.1946, Vol. III, 28 Feb-14 March 1946, 1968-9.
42 * Q. No. 1011 Re Survey of Sub-Soil Water for Irrigation by Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad, LAD, 15.3.1946, Vol. IV, 15-30 March 1946, 2461.
The legislators were interested in facilities for 'bringing of the results of agricultural investigations and experiments to the notice of the masses' and peasants of the country by means of leaflets and otherwise in the local vernaculars of each locality obviously with the view to extend and popularise the results of scientific experiments in these traditional fields of agricultural research. They debated 'whether rice is inherently more nutritious than wheat'; doubted whether Indian people were getting adequately nourishing food like rice and bread, milk and eggs, vegetables, fruits and meat; 'if yes, amounts per capita thereof'; dreaded 'whether semi-starvation is the lot of one half of the Indian population'; etc. They were curious as to what special advantages were sought to be derived by India's membership of (i) the International Institute of Agriculture, Rome and (ii) Imperial Agricultural Bureau; the main object of the former, according to the Government, 'is the collection, study and publication of statistical, technical and economic information in

50 * Q. No. 77 Re Practices Amounting to Serfdom or Servitude in Agriculture by Mr. N. M. Joshi, LAD, 1.9.1939, Vol. V, 30 August-22 September 1939, 232.
regard to agriculture and the provision of facilities for the study of all questions bearing on agriculture', the work of the latter 'is essentially scientific and not statistical, more specialised and more definitely directed to the study of particular subjects of importance to agricultural research workers.' "The organisations are complementary and membership of both is of advantage to India." The International institute of Agriculture at Rome was founded in 1905 "for the defence and representation of agriculture and agricultural interests throughout the world." 

During the period of our study the British Empire was at war with Germany since 3rd September 1939. Until the outbreak of hostilities in the Far East there was no difficulty in making food grains available to the people of India at a reasonable price. The need for an intensive "Grow More Food" Campaign, prosecuted at the expense, to some extent, of India's valuable cash crops, did not, therefore, arise until, in the course of the war with Japan, India was threatened, in the spring of 1942, with the loss of supplies, mainly of rice from Burma which, till 1937, was a part of India. The Hindu of October 1, 1942 warned:

Dr Aykroyd points out in the current issue of The Indian Journal of Social Work: 'To the nutrition worker the food situation in India is thoroughly unsatisfactory. The majority of the population lives on a diet far remote from the most moderate standards of adequate nutrition.' Even taking the normal condition as satisfactory, things are bad enough. For not only have we lost supplies from Burma, but neighbours who were dependent on other sources draw upon our stocks. Any way, complacency over the food situation is by no means justified.

Members demanded from the Government a detailed statement about the plan and programme of the "Grow More Food" Campaign, including the likely increase in the acreage of cultivation and in the yield of crops as a result of the campaign, and the practical measures adopted by the Government to make the campaign bear fruit, and whether the Government proposed to help the cultivators with money or implements or manures or technical advice for the purpose. Pointing out that, as 'Agriculture' was a Provincial subject, the Government said that the question of giving effect to the campaign

33 Royal Commission on Agriculture in India, 1928, Abridged Report (Reprinted 1983), Agricole Publishing Academy, New Delhi, 666.
34 Response of Mr. J.D. Tyson, Member for Education, Health and Lands to the * Q. No. 60 Re. Statements by Secretary of State for India on Food Situation in India by Mr. K.C. Neogy, LAD, 9.11.1943, Volume IV, 8-19 November 1943, 78.
was primarily the responsibility of the Provincial Governments. But that in view of the abnormal conditions caused by the exigencies of the Second World War, the cessation of imports, and bad harvests as well as wartime requirements of foodstuffs, the Government of India, forced to examine seriously the food situation, convened a Food Production Conference of the representatives of the Provinces and States in April 1942. The recommendations made therein were communicated to the Provincial Governments who were asked to implement them as far as possible in drawing up detailed plans and programmes to suit local conditions and needs. The specific measures undertaken, naturally varied from province to province. Broadly, they comprised vigorous propaganda in the country-side, distribution of improved quality seed, provision of irrigation water at reduced rates or reservation of canal water for food crops wherever feasible, the grant of new cultivable waste land for cultivation, revenue or rent free for a period of three to five years, liberal grants for takavi and so on. In pursuance of one of the recommendations of the Food Production Conference, the Government of India set up a Central Food Advisory Council, consisting of officials and non-officials, the functions of which were - (i) to pool, study and disseminate all available information regarding food and fodder production; (ii) to plan on all-India basis the food and fodder production programmes for the different regions and tender advice in regard to its execution, and (iii) to advise the authorities responsible about the equitable distribution of the available food stocks. It was for the Provincial Governments to help the cultivators with money, implements, manure, and technical advice, if necessary. 56 Since under the stress of war, concentration was on the increased production of food crops, therefore from the Cotton Fund, created by the levy of an additional duty on imports of raw cotton, the Government of India sanctioned grants to some provincial and State governments, on certain conditions, to enable them to offer to cultivators a direct financial inducement in the form of a small subsidy or a reduction in land revenue, for every acre of land diverted from short staple cotton to food crops. 57 British Imperial interests were at stake; therefore, the inducements to the agriculturists were timely and in order. Since an army marches on its

55 'The Food Situation', The Hindu, Madras, October 1, 1942, 4.
56 Response of Mr. J.D. Tyson, Member for Education, Health and Lands to the * Q. No. 36 Re. "Grow More Food" Campaign by Pandit Lakshmi Kanta Maitra, LAD, 15.9.1942, Volume III, 14 – 24 September 1942, 128.
stomach, nations at war are dependent upon food, and if the war was to be won, the greatest economy in food production was to be exercised. Perhaps the large landed proprietors, therefore, experienced prosperity to a certain extent because of war profits, while undoubtedly a large bulk of the agriculturists lived in poverty and destitution, though the rising food prices produced problems to consumers during this period. However, the success of the ‘Grow More Food’ Campaign depended on another - perhaps a more important - incentive to the agriculturist that is the guarantee of the minimum economic price. Because if the agriculturists were to grow more food crops, the supply would increase and this instead would prove to be a serious disincentive by bringing down the prices, therefore, the desirability of crop-planning and stabilisation of prices acquired significance. But the encouragement given by the Government of India to growing of food crops instead of short staple cotton, and thus by tremendously restricting the cultivation of the latter as part of the ‘Grow More Food’ Campaign, the price of short staple cotton -“an unwanted crop”- went up.

National Problem

As is clear from the previous chapter, agricultural indebtedness was a national problem.

Moving an amendment to a Non-Muhammadan Urban Member from Calcutta Mr. N.C. Chunder’s Resolution Re Indebtedness of Agriculturists on 24 September 1936, a Nominated Non-Official Member of the Legislative Assembly Dr. F.X. DeSouza said:

This resolution is what I may call a hardy annual. During the last six years during which I have served in this Assembly, at least three Honourable Members have moved Resolutions to the same effect but there is a striking difference in the present case. Those Resolutions were moved by Moslem members whose religion forbids the charging of interest and who may be considered as representing the indebted classes but today the Resolution has been moved by a Hindu member representing what I may call the capitalist class and by belonging to the profession to whom chronic indebtedness is not always an unmixed evil. It looks as though

57 Ibid.
58 Mr. Jamnadas M. Mehta (Bombay Central Division: Non-Muhammadan) on the Means whereby the prosperous Agricultural Conditions might be used for the Permanent Rehabilitation of Agriculture in India, LAD, 10.3.1943, Vol. I, 10 February-10 March 1943, 956.
59 Mr. Govind V. Deshmukh, (Nagpur Division: Non-Muhammadan) on the Means whereby the prosperous Agricultural Conditions might be used for the Permanent Rehabilitation of Agriculture in India, LAD, 10.3.1943, Vol. I, 10 February-10 March 1943, 942.
60 Response of Mr. J.D. Tyson, Member for Education, Health and Lands to the Q. No. 423 on Policy Re. Discouragement to Peasants to grow Commercial and Non-Food Crops by Prof. N.G. Ranga, LAD, 21.2.1945, Volume I, 8-23 February 1945, 596-7.
we have commenced to look upon this question not in terms of class but in terms of the
nation. Let us hope that this is a phase which brings the question a step nearer the solution.\textsuperscript{61}

It was idle to deny that agricultural indebtedness existed in pre-British India but the
relations in those days between the moneylender and the agriculturist debtor were far
more cordial than they were in British days. There were reasons for that. In the first
place, the village community was strong and was a check upon the extortionate
moneylender. In the second place, the State did not bother itself about the recovery of the
debts as she did in British India. With the advent of British rule was introduced the
machinery of the Courts which enforced the technical provisions of the various Codes,
the Civil Procedure Code, the Contract Act, and the Evidence Act. With what result?
With the establishment of the Civil Courts and the decline of the village community, the
reign of the moneylender began. Once the munsiff and the lawyer were enthroned in the
Courts, legality and chicanery were constantly enforced into unholy embrace, to the
confusion of justice and equity; and as a cultivator remarked, the law instead of being
used as salt became the whole diet. There was no doubt that rural indebtedness increased
during British rule. Sir Edward Mac lagan in 1911 said:

\begin{quote}
The writings of Monroe and Elphinstone and others make it clear that there was much debt
even at the beginning of our rule. But it is also acknowledged that the indebtedness has risen
considerably during our rule and more especially during the last half century.\textsuperscript{62}
\end{quote}

Mr. Muhammad Azhar Ali (Lucknow and Fyzabad Divisions: Muhammadan Rural)
speaking on the cut motion regarding \textit{Means whereby the present prosperous
Agricultural Conditions might be used for the Permanent Rehabilitation of Agriculture in
India} in the Legislative Assembly on 10 March 1943 said:

\begin{quote}
The cut motion is to the effect that we should discuss the means for the improvement of the
condition of the cultivator. How can you do it? I would refer to the sad spectacle that you see
in every Province today. If you go to the law courts, you will see the condition of the
cultivator. Every law court, every small cause court, is full of cases between the \textit{baniya}
and the cultivator. The \textit{baniya} forges pro-notes and advances money to the cultivator. He goes to
the fields and gives the cultivator 20 or 30 rupees and jots it down in his note book that he
gave the money on such and such date and at such and such rate. This pamphlet is the only
evidence sometimes in the courts against the cultivators and decrees are passed on the
strength of this evidence. The cultivator has no means of disputing this evidence. The decree
is passed and what happens? The next day, the \textit{baniya} takes the decree in his hand and goes
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{61} Q. No. 141 \textit{Re. Action Taken on the Resolution Re. Indebtedness of Agriculturists Passed by the
Legislative Assembly} by Sardar Mangal Singh, L.A.D., 25.1.1937, 71; \textit{Resolution Re Indebtedness of
Agriculturists}, LAD, 24.9.1936, Volume VII, 15\textsuperscript{th} to 28\textsuperscript{th} September 1936, 1795-1840

\textsuperscript{62} Q. No. 141 \textit{Re. Action Taken on the Resolution Re. Indebtedness of Agriculturists Passed by the
Legislative Assembly} by Sardar Mangal Singh, LAD, 25.1.1937, 71; \textit{Resolution Re Indebtedness of
Agriculturists}, LAD, 24.9.1936, Volume VII, 15\textsuperscript{th} to 28\textsuperscript{th} September 1936, 1795-1840.
The Banking Enquiry Committees attempted to estimate the extent of the indebtedness. It estimated about Rs. 900 crores as the debt in 1931 for the whole of India. The Punjab Committee estimated Rs. 90 crores for the Punjab in 1921, which rose to 135 crores in 1929 and represented, having regard to the depreciation in the value of primary commodities to the agriculturist, the colossal figure of Rs. 270 crores in 1930. The Congress also estimated a debt burden much on the same lines. In their manifesto they said that the debt rose from 9 milliards in 1929 to 16 milliards in 1936. The bulk of the population, about seventy per cent at least as remarked by the Royal Commission on Agriculture, were born in debt, lived in debt and died in debt, and they said\textsuperscript{64} During the period of our study, the Government were aware that various systems of debt bondage that could be described as somewhat akin to slavery were in vogue in certain rural areas of some provinces. The Government of India made enquiries at the instance of the Slavery Committee of the League of Nations, and the information obtained was supplied to that Committee.\textsuperscript{65} Agricultural indebtedness was the source of a number of evils that beset the Indian cultivator during this period. In the first place, a cultivator was usually born in debt, lived his life in debt, and died in debt. He was thus dependent during the whole of his life upon money that was advanced to him, frequently at a high rate of interest. Without such loans he could not pay the rent for his lands or purchase the seed or equipment necessary for the earning of his livelihood, and clearly, since he paid heavy interest on everything that he borrowed, he limited his purchases to the bare minimum that showed him some return on his money. The loans made to him could not be described as unsecured loans, even though the interest was high. There was always the security of his crop, but whether that turned out to be good or bad, the proceeds went to the moneylender rather than to the cultivator. Because he lived on a bare subsistence, he was unable or unwilling to give the land the treatment that was required. Truly by

\textsuperscript{63} Mr. Muhammad Azhar Ali (Lucknow and Fyzabad Divisions: Muhammadan Rural) on the Means whereby the present prosperous Agricultural Conditions might be used for the Permanent Rehabilitation of Agriculture in India, LAD, 10.3.1943, Vol. I, 10 February -10 March 1943, 955.

\textsuperscript{64} * Q. No. 141 Re. Action Taken on the Resolution Re Indebtedness of Agriculturists Passed by the Legislative Assembly by Sardar Mangal Singh, LAD, 25.1.1937, 71; Resolution Re Indebtedness of Agriculturists, L. A. D., 24.9.1936, Volume VII, 15\textsuperscript{th} to 28\textsuperscript{th} September 1936, 1795-1840.

\textsuperscript{65} Response of Home Member Mr. J.A. Thorne to * Q. No. 77 Re. Practices Amounting to Servitude or Servitude in Agriculture by Mr. N. M. Joshi, LAD, 1.9.1939, Vol. V, 30 August-22 September 1939, 232.
overcultivation he knew that the land would deteriorate, but to provide for the more distant future, was a luxury in which he did not as a rule indulge. Neither the cultivator nor the moneylender was seriously concerned with maintaining the land at a high standard of fertility; the concern of both was to get a quick return for their money. Therefore, agricultural banks required to be established throughout the country with the help of the Reserve Bank of India, in every Province, district, sub-division, and village.

Stabilising Agricultural Economy

As regards stabilising the agricultural economy of India, it may be noted that legislation affecting agriculture was primarily a provincial responsibility; but in respect of Centrally Administered Areas it was proposed to introduce legislation for the regulation of money-lending, for the relief of agricultural indebtedness, for the regulation of agricultural produce-markets, for the consolidation of holdings and the prevention of fragmentation, for tenancy rights and for land development. Further action was to be taken in the light of the recommendations of the Committees on Agricultural Finance, Land Utilization, Agricultural Prices, Agricultural Marketing and Co-operative Planning and Development. The members demanded to know if the Government had thought out plans to see that the agriculturists got a fair return for their produce and had not to suffer on account of slump in prices after the War. This became important because the prosperity of any country depended upon the purchasing power of the people of that country and India, being an agricultural country, the prosperity of the country certainly depended upon the purchasing power of the agriculturist. The more such power, the more were industries likely to prosper in the country. Therefore, the one thing that was essential was to fix the economic minimum price of the agricultural produce. If that was not done, nothing else could help the agriculturist. Because if under the “Grow More Food” campaign he were to grow more food, the supply would increase and that would

66 Mr. B. L. Gray, (United Provinces: European) on the Means whereby the present prosperous Agricultural Conditions might be used for the Permanent Rehabilitation of Agriculture in India, LAD, 10.3.1943, Vol. I, 10 February - 10 March 1943, 940.
67 Mr. Ananga Mohan Dam (Surma Valley cum Shillong: Non-Muhammadan) on the Means whereby the present prosperous Agricultural Conditions might be used for the Permanent Rehabilitation of Agriculture in India, LAD, 10.3.1943, Vol. I, 10 February - 10 March 1943, 958.
68 Sir Pheroze Kharegat, Agricultural Secretary in response to the * Q. No. 1017 Re. Legislation for Stabilising the Agricultural Economy of India by Mr. Ahmed E. H. Jaffer, LAD, 18.3.1947, 2075.
69 * Q. No. 150 Re. Plans for Protection of Agriculturists from Slump in Prices after the War by Mr. Govind V. Deshmukh, LAD, 19.2.1943, Vol. I, 10 February - 10 March 1943, 424.
bring down the prices. And if he was not guaranteed the minimum economic price, there was no incentive for any agriculturist to grow more food or money crops. The next important thing was marketing, merely fixing the minimum price would not do. There had to be certain methods by which the agriculturist could dispose of the produce that might be surplus or that might have been produced by him that he could safely put on the market. It was necessary for the Government to open up their own agencies so that the crops of the agriculturists might be sent to the agricultural markets and reasonable and profitable rates could be secured for them; that certain long-term contracts could be entered into with countries which imported agricultural produce with the view to secure profits in the international market for the Indian agriculturists. If necessary, legislation could be enacted to maintain the minimum prices, so that the agriculturist might feel secure for it was the panacea for all the evils of the agriculturist.70 Moreover, the agriculturists required help in matters of manure, irrigation and consolidation of their holdings. Their holdings were divided. If any cultivator wanted to irrigate his holdings or to put manure in his holdings, it was very difficult for him with small areas of plots scattered over different places.71 Besides, nearly 540 lakhs of tillers of the land were landless labourers. There could obviously be no agricultural prosperity for them except such wages as they got which often did not exceed two annas a day or even less or food, clothing and shelter given by the peasant proprietor who employed them. These people had no prospects of prosperity, and unless they were absorbed in some kind of rapid industrialisation, the rehabilitation of agriculture would remain a dream. Therefore, for rehabilitation of agriculture in India rapid industrialisation was absolutely necessary. "The fact that 80 per cent. of the population of this country depend for their living on agriculture is not a matter on which we have to congratulate ourselves but it is a matter on which we have to condole with ourselves that this percentage still continues to be a

70 Mr. Govind V. Deshmukh, (Nagpur Division: Non-Muhammadan) on the Means whereby the prosperous Agricultural Conditions might be used for the Permanent Rehabilitation of Agriculture in India, LAD, 10.3.1943, Vol. I, 10 February-10 March 1943, 942:44.
71 Maulvi Muhammad Abdul Ghani on the Means whereby the prosperous Agricultural Conditions might be used for the Permanent Rehabilitation of Agriculture in India, LAD, 10.3.1943, Vol. I, 10 February-10 March 1943, 945.
pressure on land as they have done for so many years."

Rehabilitation of Agriculture

Consequent upon the nationalist demands for the permanent rehabilitation of agriculture in India in respect of the raising of money crops, such as, for example, pyrethrum and cinchona; agricultural debt; permanent benefit of the agriculturist - planning of production, creation of agricultural credits; fixing of prices of food grains to raise the standard of living of the agriculturist; and financial policy having no other aim but to make life better for all the people of India of whom a majority were agriculturists, seeds of 5,600 lbs. of Pyrethrum were imported from Kenya in 1943 and distributed to the Governments of Madras, the Punjab, Assam, Patiala and Kashmir. Government agreed to buy the produce at certain fixed prices. The area under Pyrethrum under the scheme was 2358 acres. As regards cinchona, arrangements were made for planting of 2,000 acres in 1943 and 1944. The Policy Committee on Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries considered the question of agricultural indebtedness and as recommended by the Committee, the Government of India appointed a Sub-Committee to report on the ways in which indebtedness could be reduced and finance, both short term and long term, provided for agriculture and animal husbandry operations. The Government of India gave to the provinces for the development of agriculture Rs. 295 lakhs as loans and Rs. 222 lakhs as grants; Provincial Governments probably gave similar grants from their own funds. The main items for which grants were given from the Centre were: Irrigation, bunding, etc., Rs. 118.0 lakhs; Manure distribution Rs. 27.63 lakhs; Seed distribution Rs. 51.76 lakhs; Miscellaneous (staff, bonus for cotton restriction, etc.) Rs. 24.61 lakhs. All these schemes were for the permanent benefit of agriculturists. In April 1944 the Government of India announced that they were ready to purchase in the Punjab, United Provinces and Sind, through provincial government agency, all fair average quality wheat offered in assembling markets at Rs. 7-8-0 per maund unbagged. They also announced in May that they would buy from the crop of 1944-45 all jowar and bajra of fair average quality offered for sale in the main assembling markets of the United Provinces, Central

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72 Mr. Jamnadas M. Mehta (Bombay Central Division: Non-Muhammadan Rural) on the Means whereby the prosperous Agricultural Conditions might be used for the Permanent Rehabilitation of Agriculture in India, LAD, 10.3.1943, Vol. I, 10 February-10 March 1943, 956-58.

73 Q. No. 45 Re Steps for Permanent Rehabilitation of Agriculturists in India by Mr. Govind V. Deshmukh, LAD, 2.11.1944, Vol. IV, 1-13 November 1944, 123.
Provinces, Madras, the Punjab, Sind, and Ajmer-Merwara at prices of Rs. 5-8-0 and Rs. 6 a maund respectively, should prices fall. On the recommendation of the Policy Committee on Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, a Sub-Committee was set up to examine ways and means for an assured market for agricultural produce and to fix remunerative prices in the post war period. And, the Central and Provincial Governments planned for post-war development on the basis that considerable funds would be available over a period of years. The object of all such expenditure was to make life better for all the people of India and steps were to be taken to ensure that the rural population received their share of the benefits. In the mean time the Government of India engaged in a policy of active assistance to the cultivator by means of loans and grants, especially in connection with the “Grow More Food Campaign” as stated above, and grants such as those from the Cotton Fund. To popularise the “Grow More Food” Campaign, for example, in the North Kanara District in the Bombay Province, interest free Tagai loans were advanced to the cultivators for the purchase of improved seeds; Tagai loans were also advanced to the cultivators for the construction of wells and tanks. The loan was interest free in the first year and bore interest at the rate of 3 ¼ % per annum thereafter. 50 % of the cost of these projects was given as subsidy; rent-free leases were granted for a period of three years for bringing more land under cultivation; the area of fallow land lying uncultivated in the district was 107,462 acres and Government waste land 52,969 acres. Most of the area was fallow for a long time and was covered with thick vegetation; malaria was largely prevalent for five months of the year and the population consistently dwindled in the above Ghat Talukas and scarcity of labour was acute. Disease and pests were also responsible for fallow; a scheme of colonisation to bring larger areas under cultivation was considered by the Provincial Government. They proposed to eradicate malaria by the extensive use of DDT. A malaria research station was established which did good work. The use of DDT was extended. Similarly, the area of the Government wastelands in the districts of Gujarat, Deccan and Karnataka

74 Statement placed on the table of the House by the Secretary for Education, Health and Lands Mr. J. D. Tyson in response to * Q. No. 45 Re Steps for Permanent Rehabilitation of Agriculturists in India by Mr. Govind V. Deshmukh, LAD, 2.11.1944, Vol. IV, 1-13 November 1944, 123.

75 Response by Agriculture Secretary Sir Pheroze Kharegat to * Q. No. 1010 Re. Cultivation of Fallow Land in North Kanara District by Shri D. P. Kamarkar, LAD, 15.3.1946, Vol. IV, 15-30 March 1946, 2460-1.
respectively 112221 acres, 152971 acres, and 30090 acres were leased out rent free on
annual leases to cultivators and ex-servicemen wherever it was possible to grow food
crops.\textsuperscript{76} After all, the ‘Grow More Food’ campaign consisted of works like land
reclamation and improvement, development of new sources of irrigation, etc. and supply
of schemes like distribution of improved seeds, fertilizers, manures, etc.\textsuperscript{77} Also, necessary
steps were taken to utilise all fallow land where possible. For example, it was proposed to
bring under vegetable cultivation 60 acres i.e., about half of the Central Vista in New
Delhi. Tenants of Government bungalows were asked to grow vegetables in their
compounds. Arrangements were made for officers of the Agriculture Department to go
round the houses and advise householders as to where vegetables, etc., were to be
planted, of what types and when, and for supply of seeds, manures, etc. The limiting
factors in most cases were water and lack of staff trained in the growing of vegetables.\textsuperscript{78}
With a view to the ‘Grow More Food’ campaign, Government of India recommended a
scheme to the Universities for adoption by which food required for Collegiate hostels was
to be grown by resident students of those hostels themselves. The highlights of the
Scheme were that universities and affiliated institutions were requested to consider the
feasibility of starting farms and cultivating them on modern lines; those farms were to
take the initiative to meet the needs of their resident students for food grains and to
serve as centres for the demonstration of improved practices and the extension of those
practices in the rural areas; and the farms were to run on the lines of “Associated Farms”
which involved joint cultivation. It was proposed to give the Universities that set up
farms the same type of assistance as contemplated for institutions starting “Associated
Farms” e.g. exemption from land revenue for a few years and subsidies according to
rules.\textsuperscript{79} Schemes for increasing the production of vegetables undertaken by Educational,
Research and Cooperative Institutions within a radius of 10 miles around towns and cities

\textsuperscript{76} Response by Agriculture Secretary Sir Pheroze Kharegat to Q. No. 164 Re. Plans for Utilization of Waste
Lands in Gujrat, Deccan and Karnatak for Growth of Food Crops by Sardar N. G. Vinchoorokar, LAD,
\textsuperscript{77} Annexure No.5, Vide Answer to * Q. No. 695(a), Re. Assessment of Grow More Food Campaign.
Appendix IV to the House of the People Debates (hereafter HPD), First Session, 16-26 May 1952, 258-9.
\textsuperscript{78} * Q. No. 760 Re. Cultivation of Fallow Lands in Delhi by Shri Satya Narayan Sinha, LAD, 6.3.1946,
\textsuperscript{79} Response of Minister of Food and Agriculture Shri K.M. Munshi to Shri Lakshman’s Question Re.
Universities growing food for collegiate hostels, Parliamentary Debates (hereafter PD), Appendix XXXII,
1950-51, 2210-11.
were made eligible for financial assistance from the Centre on the same basis as schemes for production of tuber crops that were already eligible for assistance under the Grow More Food Rules. State Governments were advised to form a belt around each important city where vegetables were to be grown under special concessions; supplies of large quantities of vegetable seeds from Kashmir and from the Central Vegetable Breeding Station at Kulu were arranged for two local co-operative bodies in Delhi viz. the Delhi Peasants Multipurpose Society and the Indian Co-Operative Union who were primarily entrusted with the task of bringing 600 acres of land under the cultivation of vegetables and potatoes. The Society was also assisted in the past in securing large blocks of lands at several places for cultivation purposes. 80 According to a Statement placed on the table of the Legislative Assembly on 26th January 1937, giving information on the area under cultivation in India for food purposes, the area under food crops in 1933-34 was 217,665,000 acres; the area classed as culturable waste other than fallow was 153,449,000 acres. During the ten years 1923-24 to 1933-34 the area under food crops increased by 9,666,000 acres. 81 [An acre being a measure of land, 4,840 sq. yds. or approx. 4,000 sq. meters.] As a consequence of the ‘Grow More Food’ campaign, total additional area (in 000 acres) expected, as of 1942, to be brought under food crops like rice, wheat, gram, and millets in the major Provinces including Assam, Bengal, Bihar, Bombay, Central Provinces, Madras, NWFP, Orissa, Punjab, Sind and the United Provinces was 6,600 acres, and 33.7 acres in the Centrally Administered Areas of Ajmer-Merwara, Baluchistan, and Delhi. 82 During 1948-49, the total net area under cultivation in India was 245.9 million acres as against 245.2 million acres during the previous year, indicating an increase of 0.7 million acres. 83

**Cropping Pattern**

The cropping pattern, for example, in the Bombay Presidency as a whole showed expansion in the area under cultivation under major food-crops and non-food-crops from

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80 Annexe No. 37, *Vide* Answer to * Q. No. 1485 Re. Production and Consumption of Supplementary foods, Appendix X-XXXIII, PD, Third Session (2nd Part), 1950-51, 870.
82 Statement laid on the table of the Legislative Assembly by Mr. J.D. Tyson, Member for Education, Health and Lands in response to the * Q. No. 36 Re. ‘Grow More Food’ Campaign by Pandit Lakshmi Kanta Maitra, LAD, 15.9.1942, Volume III, 14 - 24 September 1942, 129.
1860-61 to 1941-50. Among these jowari and bajri were the major food-crops that apart from being the subsistence crops in the region found their way to the internal market. During 1861-70, the combined average area under jowari and bajri was 89.74 lakh acres; during 1941-50, it had increased to 128.15 lakh acres, implying about 42.8 percent increase. The combined average area under rice and wheat during these respective decades increased from 20.79 acres to 37.63 lakh acres, an increase of 82 percent. The combined average under major non-food crops more than doubled, showing an increase of 132 percent. The area under food-crops and non-food crops both expanded, though the rate of expansion was distinctly higher in the category of non-food crops. Production could be increased either by bringing new areas under cultivation or by securing increased yields from existing cultivated areas. The possibility of bringing new areas under cultivation was not great. The areas that had remained untilled lay mostly in zones of scanty rainfall; without irrigation it was impossible to bring them under the plough. “I am hoping, however, to start rapid soil-sampling and testing of sub-soil water-supply in these areas to find out whether it is possible to reclaim some culturable lands for the production of crops and afforestation”. Therefore, the increase in the acreage under food crops was due in part to a reduction of acres in the area under cotton, though compared with 1941-42, the area under food crops increased by 80 lakh acres during 1942-43. Government “waste” lands where available were leased to cultivators at economic or concessional rates of rent or free for the production of food crops to the extent of nearly 900,000 acres. Loans and grants were given by the Central Government to the tune of Rs. 49 lakhs and Rs. 56 lakhs respectively for land reclamation and improvement projects, including the construction of contour bunds, covering one and a half million acres. A comparison of the average figures for acreage and production in British India in the 3

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83 Response of the Minister of Food and Agriculture Shri K.M. Munshi to Shri Sanjivaya’s Question Re. Total net area under cultivation, Appendix XXXII, PD, 1950-51, 2202.

84 Brahma Nand, Fields and Farmers in Western India 1850-1950, Bibliomatrix, New Delhi, 2003, 225.

85 Sir Jogendra Singh, Member for Education, Health and Lands on the Means whereby the present prosperous Agricultural Conditions might be used for the Permanent Rehabilitation of Agriculture in India, LAD, 10.3.1943, Vol. I, 10 February-10 March 1943, 952.


87 Response by the Secretary for Education, Health and Lands Mr. J. D. Tyson to * Q. No. 126 Re. Expenditure on “Grow More Food” Campaign by Mr. Amarendra Nath Chattopadhyaya, LAD, Vol. IV, 8-19 November 1943, 227-8.
pre-war years with those for the 3 years 1942-45 showed an increase of 11 million acres and 3 million tons of the principal food grains. It was proposed to continue this campaign till 1951-52. However, the food grains production targets for 1947-48 to 1951-52 accepted by the provinces included Baluchistan, undivided Bengal and Punjab, N.W.F.P. and Sind of pre-partition India.

Sub-Soil Water for Irrigation

In view of the fact that there was a necessity to grow more food, the survey of sub-soil water that could be utilised for agricultural purposes acquired significance. Therefore, during the period of our study, steps were taken to survey sub-soil water for irrigation. For this purpose a Central Sub-soil Water Section was set up under the Irrigation Adviser in 1944 to advise the Provinces as regards suitable tracts for tube well irrigation, to carry out trial borings and to collect and co-ordinate data regarding sub-soil water supplies. The Irrigation Adviser went to the United States of America to secure the necessary machinery. A training class in the use of these boring rigs was organised at Dhanbad. Since the possibilities of getting adequate supplies of sub-soil water for irrigation purposes in the alluvial tracts particularly in the Indo-Gangetic plains were known, these were developed according to the availability of machinery. In the non-alluvial tracts of India, sub-soil supplies of irrigation water were surveyed. During the period of the study, the Provincial Departments of Agriculture made tractors available for cultivation on contract basis both for individual cultivators and for organisations like the Agricultural Development Associations. For example, twenty-eight tractors were available with the Department of Agriculture of the Bombay Province by early 1946, “in addition to ten others for which suitable implements are not available.” The provincial government was prepared to pay half the cost of tractor cultivation for increased food production. 

88 Sir Pheroze Kharegat, Agriculture Secretary in response to the * Q. No. 757 Re. Fresh Cultivation of Land due to Grow More Food Campaign by Mr. B.P. Jhunjhunwala, LAD, 6.3.1946, Vol. III, 28 February - 14 March, 1946, 1961-2.
89 Sir Pheroze Kharegat, Agriculture Secretary in response to the * Q. No. 923 Re. Expenditure on ‘Grow More Food’ Campaign by Sreejut Rohini Kumar Chaudhuri, LAD, 13.3.1947, 1848.
90 Statement placed on the table by Sir Pheroze Kharegat, Agriculture Secretary in response to * Q. No. 1097 Re. ‘Grow More Food’ Campaign by Mr. Ahmed E. H. Jaffer, LAD, 21.3.1947, 2271.
91 Reply of Sir Pheroze Kharegat, Agriculture Secretary to * Q. No. 1011 Re. Survey of Sub-Soil Water for Irrigation by Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad, LAD, 15.3.1946, Vol. IV, 15-30 March 1946, 2461.
on the one hand the above examples indicate the all-India character of the agricultural concern of the legislators, albeit largely in the colonial context and in the interest of large land-holders, on the other, these show the impact of agriculture on the natural environment of the country by the necessity of bringing in more areas under cultivation.

Agricultural Labourer

The lot of the agricultural labourers, as noted above, was unenviable. They belonged to the unorganised sector of the Indian economy. Some provincial Governments published quinquennial Agricultural Wage Census Report before the war. The Government took up with Provincial Governments the question of instituting an enquiry into agricultural labour conditions in various provinces to ascertain the systems and quantum of wages and perquisites paid to agricultural workers with a view to consider what steps were to be taken to improve their conditions of employment and to enable them to reach a reasonable standard of living. A scheme for the regular collection of statistics on agricultural wages was also under consideration of the Agriculture Department by 1947.

Cattle and Fodder

Agriculture being a Provincial subject, the responsibility of the Central Government in regard to it lay in the fields of research, education and co-ordination, therefore, cattle herds were maintained as a charge on Central Revenues for experimental and research purposes. Yet, since cattle provided the motive force in agriculture and related occupations, the nationalist demands covered their well being also such as to ensure sufficient supply of cattle food in the country, steps to improve their breed, fodder and grazing facilities for them, abolition of grazing fees for forest grazing, improvement of pasture land, methods of preventing or reducing erosion in grazing areas, deficiency in food value of the fodder and remedies, etc. Therefore, to ensure sufficient supply of cattle food in the country, 11,613 tons of wheat bran was imported from the Argentine

93 Response of Labour Member Shri Jagjivan Ram to * Q. No. 846 Re. Statistics on Wages for Agricultural Labourers by Sri V. Gangaraju, LAD, 11.3.1947, 1688.
94 Response of Secretary for Education, Health and Lands Sir Girja Shankar Bajpai to Q. No. 49 Re. Bulls and Cows Distributed Free by the Central Agricultural Department by Mr. Badri Dutt Pande, LAD, 7.9.1937, Vol. 4-5, August 23-September 13, 1937, 1243.
96 * Q. No. 1652 Re. Convening of an All-India Fodder and Grazing Facilities Conference at Delhi by Prof. N. G. Ranga, LAD, 30.11. 1938, Vol. VII, 10 November-2 December 1938, 3367-69.
and a further 4,462 tons were expected during 1946-47. The International Emergency Food Council (IEFC) was asked for an allocation of another 40,000 tons. 7,361 tons were imported from Canada, 5000 tons of cottonseed from Portuguese East Africa. The IEFC were moved to allot another 125,000 tons of cottonseed for 1947-48. 100 tons of corn gluten feed was to be imported from USA for experimental use as cattle feed. The export of cattle feeds was prohibited except under licence so was the export of oilseeds restricted. A Basic plan for the distribution of cottonseed and oilcakes from surplus to deficit areas was in operation since November 1946. 1, 60,701 tons of cottonseed and 1, 61,401 tons of oilcakes were allotted to various deficit provinces and states up to 31st October 1947. The increased production of cereal and pulses under the Grow More Food Campaign was expected to result in increased supply of fodder and concentrates. Schemes for rotational grazing were sanctioned for certain areas with the object of making more fodder available. Wherever fodder value was available in deteriorated food grains, it was utilised. For movement by rail, cattle feed and fodder were allowed Class I priority when sponsored by Government and Class II priority in other cases. The Bombay Humanitarian League and Gosewá Sangh and other associations approached the Central Government for undertaking legislation to provide for compulsory cultivation of fodder crops on a certain percentage of the area of their holdings by the cultivators. The Government considered the suggestion neither practicable nor desirable to legislate in the matter.

Agricultural Implements and Fertilizers

Finally, agricultural implements and fertilizers were as important as ever for the agriculturists. Most of the agricultural implements required in the country were made by village blacksmiths and in small foundries. An approximate estimate of the requirements of such implements during this period worked out that at least 100,000 tons of iron and steel was needed each year for the purpose. In addition organised implement

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97 * Q. No. 1394 Re. Deficiency in Food Value of the Fodder in Assam by Mr. Kuladhar Chaliha, LAD, 30.3.1939, Vol. IV, 30 March-15 April 1939, 3041.
98 Response of Agriculture Secretary Sir Pheroze Kharegat to * Q. No. 784 Re. Supply of Cattle Food in India by Pandit Sri Krishna Dutt Paliwal, LAD, 10.3.1947, 1592-3.
99 Response of Secretary of the Department of Agriculture Sir Pheroze Kharegat to * Q. No. 1115 Re. Dearth of Bhusa and Cotton Seed in Punjab by Pundit Thakur Das Bhargava, LAD, 21st March 1947, 2290.
100 * Q. No. 1116 Re. Compulsory Cultivation of Fodder Crops by Pundit Thakur Das Bhargava, LAD, 21st March 1947, 2290-1.
manufacturers needed another 12,000 tons each year for the manufacture of implements. Efforts were made to supply these requirements. The allotment, for example, for the first half of 1945 for agricultural implements, consumer goods and unlicensed sales was about 95,000 tons of iron and steel, which was distributed through Regional Deputy Iron and Steel Controllers acting in consultation with Provincial Governments. In addition, iron and steel was supplied direct by the Civil Steel Licensing Authority to organized implements manufacturers. Similar calculations in respect of requirements of fertilizers worked out that before the war, India used only 100,000 tons of chemical fertilizers in a year; some 20,000 tons of Ammonium Sulphate were produced in India in addition to a small quantity of Superphosphate, the rest being imported. In 1944 some 58,000 tons of Ammonium Superphosphate were imported and in the first half of 1945 another 30,000 tons were expected. Comparatively small quantities of other chemical fertilizers were also received. Indents were placed for importing 171,000 tons of Ammonium Sulphate in 1945-46 in addition to other fertilizers. The imports were distributed through Provincial Governments. All fertilizers purchased by the Government after 1944 were controlled by the Central Government and were allocated to the various Provinces and States for distribution. The Central Government subsidized the distribution of Sulphate of Ammonia for use on food crops mainly paddy. The subsidy varied from 50 per cent to 25 per cent of the cost of the fertilizer. This made the cultivators more fertilizer-minded. The Department of Agriculture did not advocate the use of fertilizers in preference to organic manures. Fertilizers were recommended for use in conjunction with whatever organic manure was available. Since large quantities of organics were not available to give sufficient plant food to the growing crops, application of fertilizers helped to distribute the organics over a wider area and at the same time provided the necessary plant food in a more readily assimilable form. Fertilizers were not applied to increase the fertility of the soil but to produce bigger yields of crops. The plant food in the fertilizer was readily available to the crop. "Judicious use of fertilizers increases the yield of crops by 20 per

101 Mr. J.D. Tyson, Member for Education, Health and Lands in response to * Question No. 1357 Re. Requirements of Agricultural Implements and Fertilizers by Mr. T.S. Avinashilingam Chettiar, LAD, 26.3.1945, Vol. III, March 14-29, 1945, 2027-8.
cent. to 40 per cent.” But chemical fertilizers were hardly within the reach of the cultivator. And on account of his poverty, the manure that came in the shape of cow-dung, he used as fuel, while the use of oil cakes as manure competed with its use as food for livestock.

British Imperialism versus Indian Nationalism

Although the War came to a successful end, conditions that led to the introduction of the Basic Plan for distribution of available supplies, with its attendant controls, had not materially altered. The world food situation in 1946 was no less difficult than in 1945. The devastated countries in Europe needed food in large quantities from outside. Though with the defeat of Japan, rice markets of Burma, Siam and French Indo-China reopened, the quantities offered for export, were small as compared with those in pre-war times; and, in any case, there were other countries which, owing to devastation caused by the War or for their normal dependence on imports from those areas were strong claimants to whatever was available for export. Production and movement all over the world was slow and in the meanwhile, world allocations continued to be made by the Combined Food Board, Washington. While this continued neither the Government of India nor Indian traders could operate as free agents in procuring supplies from abroad and therefore India’s own resources were to be carefully husbanded. The elements too had not been kind in 1945. The vagaries of monsoon adversely affected crops in certain parts of the country while cyclones caused considerable damage to crops in other parts. All this called for increased vigilance and greater control over the country’s internal resources. The Woodhead Commission dealt with the question of food administration at length and urged that the Government assume the obligation of feeding the population in India and that a policy of *laissez faire* in the matter of food would end in disaster.\textsuperscript{103}

One of the distinct features of the colonial context was that even the dominant indigenous classes were not subsumed within the state, and hence, they frequently came into conflict with it at various levels from time to time. This was a contradiction, which pervaded and

\textsuperscript{102} Sir Pheroze Kharegat, Agriculture Secretary in response to the *Question No. 758 Re. Import of Artificial Manure* by Mr. B.P. Jhunjhunwala, LAD, 6.3.1946, Vol. III, 28 February - 14 March, 1946, 1965.

\textsuperscript{103} Memorandum on the Food Situation in India and Development of Policy up to the 21\textsuperscript{st} January, 1946 placed on the table of the House by the Secretary, Food Department Mr. B. R. Sen in response to Q. No. 7 *Re. Statement on Food Situation* by Mr. K. C. Neogy, LAD, 5.2.1946, Vol. I, 21 January - 11 February 1946, 487-495.
assumed primacy over the other existing class contradictions and conflicts. The conflict in rural society was essentially centred on the appropriation of agrarian surplus by various agencies. The colonial state extracted surplus through heavy land revenue demand, taxes and fines. In addition, various intermediate agencies, like usurers and landlords, extracted a large portion of produce in the form of interest and rent. It pressed heavily upon the small peasants and tenants and led to numerous anti-usury protests and rent conflicts between the superior and inferior landholders. At the same time, the emerging rich peasantry clamoured for higher profits and challenged the domination of usury over the rural society as a result of which the internal conflicts became very sharp. Towards the early twentieth century, agricultural labourers were demanding higher wages, and tenants were pressing for rent reductions and other demands leading to organised strikes and creating fresh antagonism between rich peasantry and tenants as well as wage labourers.¹⁰⁴

Mass Politics: Politics of Rights over Land and People

The beginning of the modern-type of mass politics, however, really dates back to the 'no-rent' campaign led by Bal Gangadhar Tilak in western India, a short-lived but strong peasant resistance during 1896-97 when the conjectural crisis caused by the famines created favourable objective conditions by crystallising the spontaneous anti-colonial discontent. It eventually became a forerunner of Gandhian Satyagraha. Earlier Gopal Krishna Gokhale and M. G. Ranade had only formulated agrarian programmes, whereas Tilak went ahead and implemented them or at least tried to do so. The Poona Sarvajanik Sabha had already created the organisational framework. The agents of the Sabha travelled through Deccan and Konkan and established 'No-Rent Combinations' which became especially strong in Thana, Kolaba and western parts of Poona. At times peasants also established such combinations spontaneously. The entire struggle was waged within the framework of law under the influential leadership of Tilak through the Kesari. The agitation was ultimately suppressed by the colonial state through swift and ruthless coercive measures, but it foreshadowed the shape of things to come.¹⁰⁵ Because, of all the problems of Indian agriculture, the national leadership attached the greatest importance to the system of assessment and the incidence of land revenue. It declared the land revenue

¹⁰⁴ Brahma Nand, Fields and Farmers in Western India 1830-1930, Bibliomatrix, New Delhi, 2003, 739.
policy of the government, especially the high pitch of land revenue, to be a major cause of the poverty and destitution of the peasant and of the backwardness of agriculture. After all, central to the colonial revenue strategy was the attempt to institute capitalist private property, which compelled them to treat land as an economic form, a rent-seeking alienable commodity and as a monopolized means of production. The organisation of peasantry was, however, not an easy task owing to the existence of different strata with conflicting interests. The rural tensions and conflicts found their political expression in the programmes of various political parties. For the first time in 1936, the Indian National Congress made a detailed investigation of the economic condition of the various strata of peasantry, i.e., the rich peasants, owner-cultivators, tenants and landless labourers, and emphasised the need to evolve some kind of producer’s organisation (Shetkari Sangh). It was necessary to evolve a comprehensive programme including demands of various cross sections of peasantry in order to mobilise them. In formulating the peasant programme Congress stressed that the three biggest drains on the cultivator’s income were interest, rent and land revenue. Accordingly, they demanded that a debt Redemption Board should be established with powers to scale down the debts of agriculturists. Secondly, the privileges of the “Three Fs” were demanded to resolve the problem of tenancy, i.e., fair rent, fixity of tenure and free transfer. The Congress demanded that rents should not be determined by the scramble for land, but must be scaled down so as to leave for the tiller at least subsistence minimum. The occupancy rights should be conferred upon the tenants who cultivated land continuously for twelve years. The transfer of occupancy rights should not require previous consent of the landlord. The third demand related to complete overhauling of the land revenue system, including a lower tax-exemption upon the net income of Rs. 250, graduated rise in the tax on large landholders, establishment of a standing committee with official and non-official representation to inquire into the machinery of tax-assessment, etc. Further, Congress also demanded protection for the large mass landless labourers who were working on the new capitalist farms in canal tracts. It was necessary to prevent

105 Brahma Nand, ibid. 768.
the growth of slums in these areas, and to regulate the hours of work and overtime pay of these labourers. The anti-colonial grievances of the peasantry were highlighted but other problems were also not ignored, and it was one fact that made possible the participation of various groups in the movement of national liberation from colonial rule. The congruence between the areas shaded on the political map of twentieth-century colonial India by the peasant and national movements was linked to the fact that in most parts of the country it was the anti-imperialist movement that created the initial political space in which peasant movements emerged. By mobilising the peasantry into anti-imperialist political action, it created a new political awareness and awakening among them which made them receptive to the more radical or “class”-oriented ideas of peasant organisation and peasant struggles. This was widely accepted by participants, contemporaries and later commentators. For example, Indian peasants became politicised in the wake of the nationalist movement. The general spirit of defiance of authority generated by the nationalist movement from 1920 onwards and Mahatma Gandhi’s charisma surely promoted the growth of peasant movement almost throughout the country. Also, the various national revolutionary struggles led by Mahatma Gandhi and the national Congress in 1921, 1930-34 and 1940-43 roused the Indian masses, particularly peasants as nothing else in recent centuries had done. By now the peasantry had their feet firmly planted on the modern plane of national consciousness and determination to beard the British imperialism in its den through the new weapon of Satyagraha with confidence in their ability to win freedom. The peasants were brought into the national movement with a view to strengthen it and make it more broad based. But owing to the limitations imposed on the national movement by the narrow class interests of its leadership, the peasant movement did not outgrow its nationalist framework for a long time. For example, since the overriding concern of the national movement was political, the basic social and economic issues, which agitated the minds of the Bihar peasantry, were pushed into the background. Therefore, although much has been written and said about the

110 K.K.Sharma, op.cit. 10.
Champaran Satyagraha, the fact remains that this agrarian movement led by the national leadership of Mahatma Gandhi remained limited and restrained in its scope. It did not touch even the fringe of deeper agrarian issues. The Mahatma never raised fundamental questions relating to agrarian relations. The movement was directed against the European indigo planters who were mere leaseholders. Even in the role of middlemen between the landlords and the tenants the planters were less reckless in their dealings with their tenants; their rental demands were lower than those charged by the native thikadars and petty proprietors. The selection of these alien people by Mahatma Gandhi seems to be deliberate. They were the symbol of exploitation and foreign domination. Struggles against them would make peasants anti-planters and thus anti-British. As is evident, the Mahatma wanted to arouse “peasant nationalism” to end British colonialism. This type of peasant nationalism was most unlikely to generate any class antagonism, which in Mahatma Gandhi’s estimate, would result in weakening the nationalist movement.\(^{111}\)

Mahatma Gandhi was reluctant to take up issues that were divisive; he wanted to avoid any fragmentary impact on the nationalist movement. Yet the suppression of the tinkathiya system in 1918 did not put an end to peasant hostility towards the plantations. On the contrary, this hostility seemed to be deeply ingrained in the collective mind. ‘It is no longer the old relation ship which prevails’, wrote the Collector of Champaran. ‘The good feeling which existed, in accordance with which tenants took their petty disputes to the factories for decision, has disappeared’.\(^{112}\) However, the Champaran movement culminated in the virtual suppression of British indigo activity in Bihar, though this came only at a time when commercial forces had already dealt a fatal blow to the latter.\(^{113}\)

The leadership tried to reconcile the irreconcilable interests in its attempt to keep intact its national character. The result was that in course of time tensions began to develop between the nationalist leadership and the peasant organisations. But it was not until after the mid-1930s that the fissures really appeared in the broad nationalist formation. And slowly but inevitably the peasant movement, for example, in Bihar, seemed to take on the character of an autonomous movement, with its own leadership, its own programme and

\(^{111}\) Ibid. 52.
\(^{113}\) Ibid. xv.
some sort of its own independent ideology. Perhaps because of various forms of appropriation even after the enactment of the Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885 continued to be made almost universally in Bihar. During the Survey and Settlement Operations that followed the Bengal Tenancy Act, it was discovered that a large number of cesses were still extorted from the helpless tenants. Although the practice of levying *abwabs* was not uncommon in those districts where the system of payment of rent in cash was widely prevalent, it was in the south Bihar districts of Patna, Gaya, Munger and Shahabad where the system of produce-rent was mostly prevalent that extortions were made in their wildest forms.

The Depression dislocated rural society through a catastrophic fall in prices of the agricultural products, a sharp decline in average net income per acre and a drastic reduction in the purchasing power of the peasantry. Moreover, from the twenties of the twentieth century, leftism, or left-wing political activity, which grew oppositionally to the governmental positions, and turned ideologically towards the radical social transformations, played a significant role in the rising of the colonial world on account of its peoples' two-fold sufferance at the combined hands of the colonialists and the native exploiters. Despite all their divergences, extending from the ones of degrees to those of kinds, every left group or leftist organisation – whether it was the Communist party of India (founded 1925), or the Congress Socialist and later the Socialist Party (founded in 1934 and 1947, respectively), or the Royist League of Radical Congressmen and the Radical Democratic Party (founded in 1937 and 1940, respectively), or the All-India Forward Bloc (founded in 1939), or the Bolshevik Party of India (founded in 1942), or the Revolutionary Socialist Party (founded in 1940), or the Trotskyite Bolshevik-Leninist Party of India (founded in 1941), or the Revolutionary Communist Party of India (founded in 1942), or the Democratic Vanguard (founded in 1951) – was dedicated generally in its characteristic mode to the causes of both anti-imperialism and the emancipation of the toiling masses.

Both pucca colonialism and Gandhian nationalism are unimaginable without the

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114 K.K.Sharma, ibid., 11.
115 K.K.Sharma, ibid., 30-1.
railways. Laid down to run on desi steam for firenghi profit, the railways allowed that inveterate traveller, M.K.Gandhi, to carry his message to the thousands thronging wayside stations for a fleeting darshan. India's most famous third-class passenger was to hitch his career as a nationalist to this novel and plebeian carriage. And the Mahatma's personalised interaction with the "masses" took place largely at such piquantly named stations as Phapund, Nunkhaar, Bhatni – and, of course, Chauri Chaura. Mahatma Gandhi's message of resisting the sahibs forcefully but non-violently was imbied far better at impromptu rail-side meetings than at the monster gatherings at the District Headquarters.\textsuperscript{118}

In summing up, we may perhaps hold that during the period of our study, the Indian national movement and the freedom struggle and the Indian peasant movement coalesced to put an end to the two hundred years of British-raj on 15 August 1947 and to demand fundamental departures from India's pre-colonial and colonial past, and eventually to succeed in founding the Sovereign Democratic Republic of India.\textsuperscript{119}

The nationalist critique of the colonial state was at the same time an affirmation of the universal principles of the modern state. Specifically, it identified the colonial bureaucracy as a power structure that was unlimited and unchecked. Intrinsically absolutist, it was a constant reminder of the fact that for all its modernity, colonial rule was ultimately based on the right of conquest. Such a conception of executive power was incompatible with a properly constituted modern state. Through the decades of the early twentieth century, as nationalist politicians in India fought against the attempts by the colonial bureaucracy to assert its dominance, lawyers and judges were asserting what was in effect the principle of judicial independence. Quietly, almost imperceptibly, they were participating in the laying of the discursive foundations of the constitution of the independent nation-state. When the constituent assembly got down to business after 1947, the basic tenets of the Indian constitution had already been imagined into existence.\textsuperscript{119}

\textsuperscript{117} Amit Kumar Gupta, ibid. 1-9.
\textsuperscript{118} Shahid Amin, "Shaheed Express" in \textit{darpan}, Inflight Magazine of Alliance Air, 3\textsuperscript{rd} Anniversary Special, 15 Aug-15 September 2005, 80-84.
\textsuperscript{119} Partha Chatterjee, \textit{A Princely Imposter? The Kumar of Bhawal and the Secret History of Indian Nationalism}, permanent black, 2002, 378.
During the period 1936-50, the Tebhaga movement (rent reduction by 33 per cent) swept through eastern India, and the communist-led land capture movement, marked by violence, spread over central India. Yet, the national government did not wish to tackle the problem centrally. Between 1950 and 1955, the land-reform legislation enacted by various states did not aim at comprehensive land reforms but attempted only to tackle the most burning problems, such as, exploitation by zamindars and other intermediary right-holders, and, protection of superior tenants of arable land. This phase of legislative and administrative efforts is identified as Phase I of Indian land-reform measures.\textsuperscript{120}

\textit{Prajamandal Movement in the Princely States}

This phase also witnessed a major achievement of the Prajamandal movement – People’s movements in the Princely States formed an important aspect in the history of modern India. With 45 per cent of the land and 24 per cent of the people, the Princely States played second fiddle to the imperial dictates. From the nineteenth-century, till they joined the Indian Union in 1947-8, mostly they lived under the umbrella of the British. They never took serious measures or introduced steps for radical transformation of the states. There was no coherent place for the princes in the British imperial ideology. When the princes were using different strategies to retain centralised power, the people fought against the princes to demand for responsible government and later to force them to join the Indian Union.\textsuperscript{121} Nilgiri was the first princely state to merge with the Indian Union. The response of the Indian National Congress to the Prajamandal struggle in this phase reflected the complexities of transition associated with the process of decolonisation. The Congress prevaricated – shifting from uncertainty and a reluctance to alienate the princes, to harnessing the powerful anti-feudal struggles in order to integrate these feudal bastions with the Indian union.\textsuperscript{122}

\textit{Divide and Quit}

But ‘the tragic finale to the freedom struggle was the partition of the subcontinent into twin dominions of India and Pakistan within the British Commonwealth, resulting in the unfortunate fragmentation of the composite intellectual tradition, shattering the dreams of

the people on both the sides of the fence’, contrary to Mahatma Gandhi’s intentions who, though in the crucial Congress Working Committee meeting on 3rd July 1947, in the words of his grandson, Raj Mohan Gandhi, “stopped well short of obstructing a leadership united for acceptance.”

Perhaps, ‘the inauguration of the provincial autonomy in 1937 led to the widening of the chasm between the majority and minority communities as also sharpening of the differences between the Congress-Left and the Congress-Right.’ Agriculture unites as well as it divides. Nevertheless, on 15 August 1947 India got rid of the British yoke with a new national flag and Chakra Dhvaj in place of the Union Jack. Similarly, Ashokan pillar coins replaced the British coins and Indians acquired new citizenship. India stepped into a new era with freedom and hopes.

Independence not only marked a formal political break with colonial rule, and thus the realisation of national sovereignty, but – perhaps more importantly – was also seen by many of the rural poor as the start of a reform process that would transform their lives for the better. Nehruvian economic planning linked to state intervention embodied this optimism, promising as it did to redress the balance of power in the Indian countryside by a combination of land distribution, resource provision, employment policies, new technology and infrastructural improvement.

The Uttar Pradesh Zamindari Abolition Act, 1950, which covered the most populated state of India, was the first, and also a model act on this subject. An impact analysis of this act will adequately throw light on what had actually emerged out of this legislative and administrative process of land reforms. First of all, the bill was under preparation for a very long time; having been widely debated for years it gave enough opportunity to most of the zamindars, talukdars and other intermediaries to sell off or dispose of their landed property to near relatives, family-controlled trusts, or through benami (false-name) transactions. The Act was struck

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2 S.A.I. Tirmizi, ed, op.cit. vii.
3 Ibid. 73.
5 The political cohesion and uniformity of the Indian Union was achieved by establishing a uniform public law and an all India administrative, military-police and legal framework. It was enhanced by the creation of an all India network of mass communication as well as educational, postal and transport systems. A uniform system of currency, weights and measures was established throughout the Union. -A.R. Desai, *Agrarian Struggles in India after Independence*, OUP, 1986, xiii.
down by the High Court of Uttar Pradesh as *ultra-vires*. Consequently, the Constitution was amended, for the first time, in early 1951, and the Act was incorporated in the Ninth Schedule of the Constitution itself, and only thereafter became enforceable.¹²⁷

**Capitalist Norms: Politics of Power over Land and People in the Republic of India**

In the Republic of India, the political cohesion and uniformity of the Indian Union was established by clearly accepting capitalist norms and the legal premises pertaining to it, as the core of the developmental gestalt, wherein the State was to play a very active, positive role and undertake many vital economic and other functions to pursue development on a bourgeois path. The State of the Indian Union, by accepting capitalist postulates as the axis of economic development and modernization, elaborated industrial, agrarian and other policies, whose central object was to create, strengthen and expand the industrial, commercial and agrarian proprietary classes, who could produce for market and profit. The policies generated infrastructural as well as other facilities to provide stimulus to these classes and curbed or eliminated those classes, strata and forces which obstructed the endeavour to develop on the capitalist path. The state also utilized old traditional forces to the extent that they helped the path of development and prevented the forces and classes which would strive to overthrow the emerging capitalist economics and political framework which was being constructed actively by the State of the Indian Union. For this purpose, in addition to the adoption of other measures, it also elaborated a planning mechanism, which assisted the government to work out allocative priorities and disbursement of resources for developmental pursuits. The State also elaborated a vast body of legal, institutional, financial, and cultural devices which have been shaping the social history of Indian society. It should, however, be recognised that by the end of the fifties, land reform measures to eliminate intermediaries, created a broad based proprietary class who took active interest in augmenting agrarian production. The state created infrastructural facilities, made provisions for a variety of inputs, gave concessions including even the undertaking to buy a considerable amount of agricultural products through various public sector corporations such as the Food Corporation, at a price which would ensure a reasonable profit base to it.¹²⁸
