CHAPTER - I

AGRARIAN STRUCTURE AND REFORMS IN INDIA

Agrarian structure is one of the three determinants of the rate and pattern of agricultural development of a country. Highly skewed distribution of land holdings may have an adverse impact not only on agriculture growth but also on large proportion of rural population who remain either landless or semi-landless. Though other factors like population growth and technological changes might have influenced the Indian agrarian structure in recent years, the impact of land reforms and land ownership pattern is worth examining. Of the various resources used in agricultural production in India, arable land is almost entirely owned and cultivated by millions of peasant households. The bulk of them have very small holdings (56 per cent of the holdings are less than one hectare). Owner cultivation is preponderant. Tenant cultivation accounts for 50 per cent of the area. Much of the waste lands and forest lands are state owned.1

The struggle for land and for the right to use land and the vicissitudes of man’s relation to land are ever recurring features in the history of mankind. The actual power structure is reflected by the pattern of land distribution and ownership. The saying whoever owns the land yields the power, holds true for rural India even at present. History is full of examples of recurrent attempts to adjust land distribution to given social and economic developments. The demand for agrarian reforms is one of the significant features of the present age marked by the growing contrast between backward agriculture and subsistence level of present life in the underdeveloped countries and industrialised farming and ever

increasing wealth in advanced west. This is true even in a given country. Reality and potential for future socio-economic development is the peasants of underdeveloped world and thus claim for agrarian reforms.

**LAND DISTRIBUTION**

Redistribution of land is recurrent historic event. The permanent land distribution pattern has never existed and rights in land have been gained and lost by either external intervention or internal changes, leading to deterioration of land use and contributing to present poverty and economic and social stagnation. Of all the changes in the land distribution pattern a land reform which aims at establishment of effective and rational farm units serving the needs of the entire rural population, is the one measure designed to improve the economic and social conditions in agricultural sector and to enhance the dignity of the man on the land.

Land distribution in substance is the reallocation of agricultural resources. It involves changes in ownership and land use pattern which affect agricultural productivity in one way or another. Land re-distribution, by way of land reform, may interrupt the vicious cycle of poverty, ignorance and stagnation and start a new chain of cause and effect paving the way for agricultural development.

Land reform is used to denote an integrated programme that aims at reorganising the institutional framework of agriculture in order to facilitate social and economical progress in accordance with the philosophy, values and creed of community concern.

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According to United Nations (U.N.'s) definition, land reform comprises an integrated programme of measures designed to eliminate obstacles to economic and social development arising out of defects in agrarian structure. The measures included are:

(i) Provision of opportunities for ownership;
(ii) Measures to promote land settlement and security of tenure;
(iii) Improvement of tenant conditions e.g., by the reduction of excessive rent or share payments;
(iv) Improvement of conditions of employment and opportunities for agricultural labour;
(v) Protection of cultivated land under tribal, communal and other traditional forms of tenure;
(vi) Organisation of farms of economic size or land consolidation;
(vii) Land title registration;
(viii) Extension of agricultural credit and reduction of indebtedness; and
(ix) Promotion of cooperative organisation used by farmers.

The U.N. later departed from the former line of definitions and used agrarian reform in the place of land reform. Structural reform is also used as a more comprehensive approach to the problems of institutional and social developments in the place of agrarian reform. The term institutional reform covers not only the reform of land tenure systems for the entire range of measures effecting the institutional frame work for better peasant life and society. Even the most generous land redistribution scheme is doomed to failure, unless the peasant is supported by the complementary measures in the institutional fields of credit, extension, education, cooperation and marketing which in their term must be coordinated with resource development and
industrialisation. This approach only ensures the protection of the peasant against the impact of superior market forces and establishes new patterns of land and income distribution, of social values of rural-urban relations which will make possible the transition from subsistence to market economy and from servitude to meaningful life.

As said earlier agrarian reform is a wider concept covering many aspects or measures each of which is discussed in what follows.

**DISTRIBUTION OF LAND OWNERSHIP AND USE IN INDIA**

The inequality in the distribution of land owned in India has shown some decline in the sixties as measured by Gini ratio. Inequality in the distribution of the area operated also declined, but the decline was less marked than in the case of owned land at a given points of time. The distribution of area operated is less unequal than that of owned area. This is attributed to leasing in of land by large farmers. One interesting observation is the convergence of the distribution of owned and operated area, owing largely to the decline of the area under tenancy due to the resumption of land by the large land owners from medium and small. The tendency towards convergence of two distribution is more due to subdivision of land holdings due to inheritance and sale and purchase of land than redistribution of land through tenancy reforms and land ceilings. So the net result is increase of marginal and small farmers in terms of number and the proportion of area operated, whereas the large farmers declined in importance both in numerical terms and percentage of total area operated by them. Though these changes in the distribution of land owned and used obviously indicate a trend toward less inequality, landless as well as number of marginal farmers has

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increased significantly. The two planks of land reform viz., land ceiling legislation and tenancy legislation have worked in opposite directions, the former contributed to the less inequitious land distribution whereas the later led to more inequitious land distribution due to resumption of land which was leased out by large land owners. This tendency has been reinforced by technological changes.

Population pressure in India in states like Assam and Bihar due to increasing nonviability of marginal holdings, marginal farmers leased out land to medium and large farmers. Population pressure, land reforms, technological change and meagre employment opportunities in the nonagricultural sector combine to bring the problems of small marginal farmers to the central stage in the Indian agrarian economy. The question of economies of scale and cooperative farming, the physical and institutional infrastructure eg., irrigation and credit institutions for supporting small and marginal farmers and basic elements of public policy for small and marginal farmers require special attention.

The farm size is determined partly by the institution organisation of agriculture and partly by man-land ratio. The growing population, slow expansion of employment opportunity in nonagriculture occupations and repeated sub-divisions of land, have lead to a system of distribution of land in India in which large holdings are an exception and vast majority of the holdings are of smaller size.

After the abolition of intermediary rights i.e., zamindari different interests in land in India are: large owners, small and middle owners, tenants and landless labourers. In India economic holding or family holding is determined by three
criteria, bullock unit, labour unit and income unit. Owners of land not exceeding family holding are considered small owners. Owners of land having extent of land exceeding one family holding but less than three times of family holdings are known as middle owners. Agricultural labourers are those who depend on agriculture wages for more than half of their income. Though their number is large they farm a residuary in Indian agriculture. They constitute 20 per cent of rural households and large proportion of them are without land or without asset base. They face the compound problem of unemployment and lower and uncertain income and nutritional deficiencies. Their employment pattern reveals high seasonal variations. Without basic reconstruction of village economy it is not possible to create conditions of equality of opportunity for the landless agriculture labour. The impact of maldistribution of land ownership on incentive to work of the share croppers, tenants and agricultural workers is detrimental. Glaring disparities in the ownership of land prevent the building up of progressive rural economy.

OBJECTIVES OF LAND REDISTRIBUTION

The dual objectives of land redistribution are: (1) to procure enough surplus cultivable land that can be made available for ownership operation among large number of rural people whoever remain without any piece of land but keep a genuine interest in farming or who have farm holdings which do not afford adequate income to maintain a given level of living standard; and (2) to re-organise the farm structure so as to make a efficient use of resources and provide maximum welfare to the farm population.

ECONOMIC DIMENSIONS OF LAND DISTRIBUTION

Land reforms have been introduced for the basic objective to confer rights in lands to tillers of the soil, who have been working only as landless agricultural laborers or subsistence farmers cum agricultural labourers. The rational approach to the land distribution problem should have been to distribute land to those who have enough farm inputs including the family labour and no second best alternative source of living.

Transfer of land from owner to tiller may sound a well motivated step on the face of it, but it will definitely jeopardise the economic incentives of the farmers who under unavoidable conditions have to lease out their lands. The truth is land was leased in by small as well as large operators. More than 60 per cent of the total leased in area was with those who operated a holding of more than 10 acres each. As much as 18 per cent of the land operated by the group with more than 50 acres was taken on lease. According to the first report of NSS small land owners as well as large owners leased out land, though the percentage of families leasing out land increased gradually with increase of ownership land holding. It was 44 per cent in the land size group of 50 acres and above. At the lower rungs of distribution the reverse is true, as 9.42 per cent in the size group of less than one acre and 22 per cent in the size group of 2.5-4.99 acres leased out the land. In terms of total area of the leased out land 70 per cent was accounted for by those rural households owning and operating less than 10 acres. Out of this 70 per cent of the total leased out area, 36 per cent was contributed by those households whose per household ownership was less than 1 acre. So from the preceding analysis it is clear that out-right decision to transfer ownership right of land to tenant adversely affect 70 per cent of land owners who leased out land to tenants. This also exploded the myth that land leasing-in families are small farmers and leasing-out families are big farmers.
The land that should be distributed to landless be surplus land, or the land that would be mainly available from old fallow (forest or revenue area or both) cultivable waste. In the later case reclamation of land is the first necessity. After when land has been developed and made fit for crop cultivation it should be distributed to landless workers and small farmers. Whenever suitable conditions exist, farm cooperatives should be organised on new land. The impact of land distribution should be studied keeping in view the needs of agricultural development: (i) Self sufficiency in food; (ii) Self sufficiency in raw materials for agriculture based industries and agricultural feeding industries. Land distribution bringing changes in the proportion of small medium and big farm holdings is bound to show its impact on agricultural production. It is established fact that small owners of land in India mainly are oriented to selfconsumption oriented cropping pattern. If cultivated land is more evenly distributed to landless workers or small farmers it results in cultivation of food crops replacing commercial crops which would ultimately lead to imbalance in raw material supply which in turn to adverse consequences for import substitution on one hand and export promotion on the other. The growing class of small farmers with risk aversion contribute a little to the demand for improved agricultural inputs such as tractors, fertilisers, pesticides, insecticides, lift irrigation, etc.

So it is observed that uneconomic holding is mainly responsible for the existence of tenancy in those states where tenants outnumber the owner operators. Therefore, it is suggested to allot more land to small farmers having uneconomic holdings so as to make their farm units viable. This also eliminates
the practice of leasing out land for the reason of nonviability. The farmers could not switch over to purely food crops, because their holding sizes provide area for growing commercial crops. The farm productivity would also be higher on the holdings of economic size. Hence the immediate objectives of any plan of reorganisation of farm units created by the land reform must be to maximise employment and to enhance productivity and to raise levels of income\(^5\)

**LAND DISTRIBUTION ASPECT OF AGRARIAN REFORM**

Debate on agrarian reform measures in India has been intense, particularly on the ownership of land holdings and its economic and social consequences. Though there is an abundance of literature on land re-distribution, the basic questions in the debate-philosophical, ideological and political goals of land distribution and likely impact of land redistribution on land use patterns, efficiency of resource allocation and the economic incentive of cultivators have not been examined from these perspectives. The objective of the land redistribution measure is considered to be achieved by fixation of ceiling and floor on the ownership holding\(^7\).

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Ceiling as a measure of redistribution of land holdings emerged first from the National Congress Committee. The Committee opined that the land should be held for use as a source of employment. After fixing the maximum size of holding the surplus land over such a ceiling should be acquired and placed at the disposal of village cooperatives. Unlike the above mentioned committee, the Congress Agrarian Reforms Committee under the chairmanship of Kumarappa emphasised the need for setting an upper and lower limits of individual farming. Invoking social justice the committee felt there should be reasonable relationship between the economic holding and maximum size of holding. The economic holding would afford a reasonable standard of living to the cultivator and provide full employment to the family of normal size. The ceiling should be three times the economic holding. One limitation of the report is that the terms economic holding, reasonable standard of living and full employment were used in very broad terms leading to difficulty to relate each of them to the objectives of land redistribution. The First and Second Five Year Plans also placed too much emphasis on ceilings with no clear cut indication as to what the ceiling was expected to achieve and in what manner. The First Plan reported that to reduce the holdings of large owners with a view to provide land for the landless or to increase the farms sizes of those having uneconomic fragments were not likely to be achieved in any substantial manner. The question of imposing ceiling on land should be answer in terms of general principles rather than the possible use of the surplus land over and above the ceiling that might be set. The Second Plan stated that ceilings were needed for developing cooperative rural economy
as well as enabling landless to acquire better social status. It further recognised that the distribution of land in excess of ceiling might yield relatively limited result i.e., only small proportion of agricultural workers could be settled on land made available under the ceiling measure.

Thus the statements made in the first two Five Year Plans do not reflect the final goal at redistribution—either economical or social. The plans were also silent as to what criterion should be used to determine the priorities of claims to distribution of surplus land among various classes of rural families. Thus ceiling was considered to be fixed at three times the size of the family holding, but the definition of family holding was completely missing. The result was the different states adopted the holding concept, according to the need and convenience. That is the reason why M.L. Duntwala feared that the latitudes the states would have led to the great deal of divergent in the ceiling levels not necessarily justified by regional conditions. He felt that even it would be possible to undermine the very objective of ceiling legislation by a convenient definition of family holding. To Raja Krishna ceiling is a Just an odd reconciliatory measure to solve social injustice i.e., large scale property and the economic inefficiency of small property by way of finally pooling the millions of scattered farm units into Joint cooperative farming. In various ceiling recommendations what was emphasised was that the surplus land should be distributed only normally but cultivated effectively. From this it can inferred that the final aim of land ceiling measures is not to redistribute the land as a means of establishing an economically efficient small family farm structure.

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8 Ibid, pp. 5-6.
Tenancy in agriculture can be approached in two ways: one approach is looking at it as an instrument of reallocation of land from the surplus owners of land to the peasants with the deficit land in relation to their other agricultural inputs like family labour units, bullock units and other infrastructural units like irrigation. In other approach it is regarded as an instrument of exploitation of the tenants by large land owners. If the land reforms in the forms of land ceiling have been ruled out in the present socio-economic conditions reallocation of land through the lease market is likely to lead to both efficient utilisation of land and labour.

The benefits of tenancy depend upon the terms of tenancy such as fixed rent contracts and share cropping arrangements. It is pointed out that the share-cropping farmer will apply less labour and produce less output than the peasant cultivators, unless the lessor is able to enforce the desired intensity of cultivation. But in reality the latter is a difficult practice by reducing tenants incentive to effect improvements of land which bring long term efficiency. Share cropping is an index of inefficiency and unfavourable terms of tenancy.

The lease market, which is characterised by near monopoly on the supply side and near competition on the demand side, leads to higher incidence of share cropping than that of fixed rent tenancy. Land augmenting technological progress restricts the tenancy of reallocation of land in favour of marginal farmers and reduces the extent of share cropping.
Temporal analysis reveals between 1960-61 and 1982 the lease market shrunk in all the states. So leased-in area as percentage of operated area declined from 10.70 in 1960-61 to 10.57 in 1971-72 and to 7.32 in 1982. The shrinkage of tenancy is also supported by NSS data which reveals the following points.

1. In each land size class the ownership and use of land diverge marginally.

2. In all land size classes land is leased in as well as leased out.

3. The net effect of residual leasing in or leasing out on land transfer is insignificant.

4. The direction of leasing, i.e., extent of leased in as against leased out varies according to crops grown in a region as well as size in ownership holding.

The pattern of leasing-in and leasing-out of agricultural land, can be of two types: horizontal and vertical. In the former type after leasing-in is over both tenant and lessor fall in the same size groups. This is also termed as intra-class tenancy. The vertical tenancy is the type where a farmer leases a land from the another farmer, who is left with more or less land compared to the farmer. Thus in the latter time the tenant and lessor belong to different size categories of operational holding. This can also known as inter class tenancy. This is also an indicator of divergence between ownership and cultivation of land and that of demand and supply of land by different classes of farmers. For the year 1971-72 the middle farmers (5 to 25 acres) and large farmers (more than 25 acres) leased-out land and the marginal farmers (up to 5 acres) leased-in land. In 1982
also the same pattern continued though absolute area land leased out by middle and large farmers declined. The marginal farmers were on balance leased in land. But percentage of net leased area in total cultivated area by them declined from 20 per cent in 1971-72 to 11 per cent in 1982.

The internal tenancy (leasing in from the rural land owning classes) and the external tenancy (leasing-in land from the urban classes and defence persons) have an influence on the leasing-in of land by marginal farmers. The external tenancies are major suppliers of land to marginal farmers. With shrinkage in external tenancy over the decade (1982 over 1971-72) the availability of land to the marginal farmers was reduced to one-half. The middle and large farmers became minor suppliers of land to the lease market for the marginal farmers in 1982.

So the degree of severity of tenancy depends not only on proportion of rented land in relation to the total operated area by group of farmers but also mode of payment of rent and amount. At all India level the percentage of area leased-out for share cropping to total area leased-out declined from 56.5 in 1971-72 to 45.92 in 1982. The implication of above analysis is that economic conditions of marginal farmers in the absence of adequate growth of nonagricultural economic activities, would be adversely affected. The growing concentration of rural households in the marginal farm category and detentantisation due to shrinkage of land through tenancy, could ultimately force majority of them to give up cultivation and join the ranks of rural proletariat.

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AVAILABILITY OF SURPLUS LAND

Since the inception of the land ceiling programme a total of 2.97 million hectares have been declared surplus under both the pre-revised and revised land ceiling laws. Of this, 2.38 million hectares have been taken possession of and 1.82 million hectares have been distributed to 3.37 million persons. In percentage terms 79.35 per cent of area declared surplus, has been taken possession of and 61.29 per cent of area declared surplus has been distributed, 43.61 per cent of the area distributed has been given to SCs and STs who account for 54.63 per cent of total number of beneficiaries.¹⁰

Looking at the operational holdings and area operated by category and size of operational holdings, it is very clear that marginalisation of the peasantry is going on at a faster rate and there has not been any serious dent on effective concentration of land in a few hands inspite of the revised land ceiling laws of early seventies. Inequality of land distribution is a glaring phenomenon in India, since small and marginal farmers with holdings of land up to two hectares of land represent about 78 per cent of the land holdings and accounting for only 23 per cent of the cropped area in 1985.¹¹

Estimates of surplus land based on sample surveys and Agricultural Census on the basis of average land ceiling limits in each state are given below:


(Million hectares)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16th round of NSS (1960-61)</td>
<td>5.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26th round of NSS (1971-72)</td>
<td>4.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural census, (1970-71)</td>
<td>12.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural Census, (1976-77)</td>
<td>8.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural census, (1980-81)</td>
<td>9.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estimates made by State Governments</td>
<td>2.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actually declared surplus so far</td>
<td>2.94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The reasons for the wide gap between the surplus estimated from agricultural census and actually declared surplus, are:

1. doubling the ceiling limit in case of families with over five members;
2. provision to give separate ceiling limit for major son of the family;
3. provision for treating every share holder of a joint family as a separate unit for ceiling limits;
4. exemption of land under plantation crop and of lands held by religious and charitable institutions from ceiling limits;
5. benami transaction to defeat the ceiling law; and
6. nonapplication of appropriation ceiling to the lands newly irrigated by public investment.
The declared surplus is less than two per cent of cultivated area.

Conceptual change for the better has noticed in the Approach to the Seventh Plan when it stated, "The core of the anti-poverty programmes lies in the endowment of income generating assets on those who have little or none of these. Hence redistributive land reform and security of tenure to the informal tenants have to be directly integrated with the anti-poverty package of programmes".

The same position was reiterated by the seventh Five Year Plan when it observed that land reforms have been recognised as a vital element in terms of anti-poverty strategy and modernisation and increased productivity in agriculture. Redistribution of land could provide permanent asset base for large number of rural landless poor for taking up land-based and other supplementary activities. Consolidation of holdings, tenancy regulation and land records updating would give widened access to small and marginal land holders to improve technology and inputs, which will lead to improved agricultural production.

**TEMPORAL VARIATIONS IN THE AGRARIAN STRUCTURE IN INDIA**

Study of distribution of ownership land holdings in India as a whole reveals that large and medium holdings accounted for 10 per cent of share in the total number of ownership holdings and 50 per cent share in the total area owned in 1971. The corresponding shares of this group in 1981 were 8 per cent and 48 per cent. At the bottom the proportion of marginal holdings in total
holdings increased from 63 in 1971 to 67 in 1981. The proportion of area under them to total area rose from 10 per cent in 1971 to 12 per cent in 1981. Coming to the distribution of operational holdings the picture continued to be one of highly inequitious distribution though the degree of inequality was found to be comparatively less with operational holdings than ownership holdings. The measure of concentration ratio with respect to ownership holdings, which is an overall measure, increased from 0.71 in 1971 to 0.713 in 1981. Pertaining to operational holding the concentration ratio rose sharply from 0.586 in 1971-72 to 0.629 in 1981-82. From this it can be concluded that land ceiling legislation had no impact in bringing equity in distribution of ownership holdings.\textsuperscript{12}

**GROWTH OF LANDLESS AND SEMI-LANDLESS HOUSEHOLDS**

Another interesting feature revealed by National Sample Survey was that the proportion of landless households to total rural households increased from 11.3 per cent in 1981 to 13.42 per cent in 1991 for India as a whole. Combined proportion of landless and semi-landless (with an average land size of 0.2 hectare to 0.5 hectare) increased from 53.9 per cent in 1981 to 61 per cent in 1991, for India as a whole. The increasing proportion of landless and semi-landless in total rural households appears to be alarming situation as the proportion of chronicle unemployed persons are also reported to be increasing in both rural and urban areas in most of the regions of India.

The preceding analysis indicates the need to tackle the problem of increasing landlessness and marginalisation of rural land owning households in an integrated way through radical agrarian reforms and planned rural industrialisation by diversification of rural economy\textsuperscript{13}.

RURAL LABOUR FORCE COMPOSITION

To judge the quality of rural community structure with reference to composition of work force two criteria are applied - the income and entitlements accruing from particular type of employment; degree of dependence or attachment conditions involved in the type of employment. Among three types of employment-self employment-regular wage or salary work and casual work-the last should be considered inferior to the other two. On the preference scale self-employment comes first followed by regular wage or salary employment and casual employment. Data from NSS Rounds on structure of employment at three points of time 1972-73, 1977-78 and 1983 revealed the self-employment declined both for male and female whereas as casual employment increased more for males than females. Further the incidence of unemployment was positively and significantly co-related with the percentage of casual workers in the work force.

Sectoral (Industrial) distribution of work force reveals that the share of non-agricultural to total workers in the rural areas increased from 17 per cent in 1972-73 to 23 per cent in 1978 among females. This may be considered as a favourable turn indicating the diversification of rural economy, subject to correction after knowing the role of push and pull factors.

\textsuperscript{13} ibid, pp. 315-318.
Relative growth of agriculture and nonagriculture employment can be obtained from the analysis of actual person days of employment. Based on this measure the share of non-agricultural sector in total employment fell between 1972-73 and 1978, the fall being more pronounced among females. But it had risen substantially from 22 to 27 per cent in the case of males as indicated by 1983 data. Whatever the causal factors strong positive association between unemployment rate and non-agriculture unemployment in rural India can be found.\textsuperscript{14}

**RURAL ASSET DISTRIBUTION AND COMPOSITION OF LABOUR FORCE**

In any discussion on the quality of agrarian rural community structure, final focus should be on the distribution of land ownership and operational holdings. Since land constitutes 60 per cent of total rural assets, this is reason why its equitable distribution is a major concern of public policy as it affects socio-economic-political life of the rural community. Apart from land distribution, distribution of non-land assets and emerging structure of rural employment are to be included in the discussion. This helps to assess the nature and process of rural economic diversification. Using data on assets and employment of RBI's Debt and Investment Surveys and the various rounds of National Sample Survey, the real value of rural assets had increased at the rate of 4 per cent per annum during the decade 1971-81. Over the same period significant change in the composition of rural assets had taken place. What is disheartening is the insignificant share of non-farm business equipment in total assets in 1971 and

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid, pp. 278-280.
1981 with percentage shares of 0.2 and 0.3 respectively, which indicates non-diversification of rural economy by way of no growth of non-agricultural enterprises. Coming to other rural assets the state level data revealed that there was a notable increase in the share of durable household assets between 1971 and 1981. In all the states there was a decline in the share of livestock which was accounted for in the reduction of number of bullocks. Another important finding was that ratio of all assets per cultivator household to that of non-cultivator household, which declined from 5.59 to 4.96 in favour of the latter. But limitation of this conclusion was the absence of disaggregated data for different non-cultivator households, to know which of the sub-category had improved their position. From NSS data it was noticed that assets other than the land had a somewhat higher degree of equality.15

LAND PROBLEMS OF SCHEDULED CASTES AND SCHEDULED TRIBES

Though large number of SCs and STs derive their livelihood by working on land. They are the most disadvantaged in respect to land. Compared to general population the incidence of landlessness is more pronounced among these groups. Further, more land cultivated among these groups is more of uneconomic and small holdings than that of the general population.

Coming to landless agricultural labourers who were 14.55 crore in 1991, 4.80 crore (33 per cent of the total) and 1.45 crore (10 per cent of the total) belonged to SCs and STs respectively. Further, according to 1991 census, 76 per cent of SC cultivators and 65 per cent of ST cultivators had holdings below two hectares of land. One more problem is related to alienation of land. Land allotted to STs are often found to be alienated to non-tribals. Leasing of lands in the wake of commercial agriculture from small farmers, the majority of whom belong to scheduled castes and tribes, is another disturbing phenomenon.

The measures adopted to ameliorate the economic conditions of SCs and STs fall under two categories: (1) promotion measures undertaken on allotted land to these groups on priority basis; and (2) Under protective measures undertaken for controlling alienation of land, especially from tribals to non-tribals. Either through legislation or executive orders preferences are given to SCs and STs in the distribution and allotment of surplus land.¹⁶

CHANGING AGRARIAN STRUCTURE AND LEADS FOR LAND REFORMS IN 1990S IN ANDHRA PRADESH

Land reforms in Andhra Pradesh state did not contribute directly providing improved access to land to landless agricultural labour and marginal owners. A significant extent of wasteland was reported to have been distributed to the landless, but there was little information on the status of such land. Though percentage share of agriculture in total income which was 54.2 in 1970-73 was pushed down to 35.7 per cent share in 1986-89, this did not lead to

corresponding decline in its share of employment. Share of agriculture in total work force was 73.4 per cent in 1971 and 72.02 in 1981. Per capita net sown area was 0.36 hectare in 1961 and 0.22 hectare in 1986-87 whereas the corresponding figures per worker in agriculture were .54 hectare and 60 hectare. Average size of landholding was 1.72 hectare in 1986-87. All indicate conclusively increasing pressure on land.

Trends in landlessness revealed that 6.94 per cent of rural households were landless in 1971-72 and this percentage increased to 11.93 per cent in 1982. Agricultural labourer as a percentage of total workers within agriculture were 52.9 per cent in 1981 in Andhra Pradesh. Decline in the percentage of regular wage and salary workers along with increase in percentage of agricultural laborers, resulted in greater insecurity of employment for rural labour. Casualisation of rural work force was increasing as 79.05 and 97.26 per cent of male and female wage earners respectively were casual labourers in 1987-88 with corresponding figures of 71.90 and 94.12 per cent in 1983. No evidence could be shown that there was a decline in the concentration in the large (above 10 hectares), relative to the ownership of the small groups (below one hectare). To make land reforms effective unearthing bhumai transaction to acquire surplus land within the existing land ceiling legislation, curbing of absentee landlordism on the grounds of efficiency and equity, establishment of rights of small tenants and extension of wet land ceiling legislation to the dry land brought under public irrigation projects, are needed.\(^{17}\)

CONCLUSION

Agrarian structure is one of the determinants of the rate and pattern of agricultural development, along with population growth and technical change. Highly skewed distribution of land ownership adversely impacts agricultural growth and large proportion of rural population which consists of landless or semi-landless. Land reform as an important plank of agrarian reform, is an integrated reform that aims at primarily provision of ownership of land and promotion of cooperative organisation used by farmers. 20 per cent of the Indian rural households which are agricultural labourer households with no assets, face the problem of unemployment and low and uncertain income. Ceiling as a measure of redistribution of land emerged first from National Congress Committee and since then it has been pursued with different degrees of success. Leasing of land is yet another aspect of agrarian reform. In India the percentage of area leased out for share cropping to total area leased out declined from 56.5 in 1971-72 to 45.92 in 1982. In the absence of adequate growth of non-agricultural employment in rural areas, increasing deterenntisation and concentration of farmers in marginal category, force the farmers to join the ranks of rural proletariat.

Since the inception of the land ceiling programme in India, 2.97 million hectares have been declared surplus, 2.36 millions hectares have been taken possession of, and 1.82 million hectares have been distributed to 3.37 million poersons. 43.61 per cent of the area distributed has been given to SCs and STs who account for 54.63 per cent of the total beneficiaries. But the declared surplus is hardly 2 per cent of cultivated area. Land ceiling measures made no serious
dent on land ownership pattern. Large and medium holdings accounted for 10 per cent of the total holdings and 48 per cent of the area operated, whereas marginal holdings had a share of 67 per cent in total holdings and of 12 per cent of the total area in 1981. Growth of landless and semi-landless is a disturbing element of Indian agrarian structure. Landless labour households to total rural households as a percentage increased from 11.3 per cent in 1981 to 13.42 per cent in 1991 for India as a whole. Share of semi-landless in the land size group of 0.2 to 0.5 hectare increased from 53.9 per cent in 1981 to 61 per cent in 1991. Over a period of time self-employment declined and casual employment increased. Insignificant share of non-form business equipment in rural assets reveals lack of rural economic diversification.

The incidence of landlessness is high among SCs and STs when compared to general population. In the total agricultural labourers of 14.55 crore in 1991, 43 per cent were SCs and STs. Further 76 per cent of SC landholdings and 65 per cent of ST landholdings were in the land size group of 2 hectares and below. Both promotive measures like land assignments and protective measures like controlling land alienation are initiated to ameliorate economic conditions of SCs and STs.

In Andhra Pradesh the share of agriculture in total income came down from 54.2 per cent in 1970-73 to 35.7 per cent in 1986-89. Whereas its share in total workforce remained high at 73.4 per cent in 1971 and 72.02 per cent in 1981. Per capita net sown area of 0.22 hectare and per agricultural worker net sown area of 0.6 hectare, and average land holding size of 1.72 hectares in 1986-87, testify conclusively the increasing pressure on land. 11.93 per cent were
landless in 1982. Agricultural labourers as percentage of total work force was 62.9 in 1981. Casualisation of work force has been even increasing, as 79.05 and 97.28 per cent of male and female rural workers were casual labourers. Directions for land reforms in Andhra Pradesh in 1990s are unearthing binami transactions to acquire surplus lands, curbing absentee landlordism, establishment of rights of small tenants and extension of wet land ceiling legislation to dry lands brought under public irrigation projects.