CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY
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Perhaps the most characteristic feature of our times is that economic development has become the goal and ambition of people. The needs which this desire creates are immense; they are of course urgent everywhere and they cannot be postponed. Consequently there was a frantic search for formulae of rapid economic development. It was claimed that agrarian reform is the indispensable condition for the development of productive forces and the industrialisation of a state.

A key element in the land reform policy is the provision of wider opportunities for ownership of land. Measures taken include redistribution of large estates, assistance to tenants or labourers to acquire holdings, and settlement schemes to establish new farming units on reclaimed or developed lands.
There are three essential principles that underlie a just and equitable land system. First, the farmer must be able to own land or to use the land he tills under fair conditions and terms of tenure. Secondly, the farmer must have access to credit on reasonable terms to enable him to farm efficiently whether as owner or as tenant. And finally, he must have access to knowledge and techniques that will make his efforts productive and profitable to him and society.

Keith Griffin, among others, has argued that redistribution of land ownership would be the most effective means of reducing rural inequality and poverty and would increase production and total income in most contexts. He notes that small farmers tend to use land more completely and with higher yields and value added per hectare, as evidenced by studies in Bangladesh, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Thailand, Pakistan, India and the Philippines.


In India, at the time of independence, the land in the country was concentrated in the hands of a few landlords. The land tenure system was quite complex and complicated. Between the landlord and the actual cultivators, there were numerous types of tenures which had entirely different characters through out the country. The landlord leased out land either to intermediaries, or to tenants. The intermediaries, tenants, subtenants, cultivators and labourers who constituted the majority had no ownership rights on their holdings. But the socio-economic life of the village community was largely influenced by the land ownership.

The agrarian structure as a whole was ineffective and insufficient to attain economic development. But after independence measures were introduced to change the system and it had its repercussions through out the country. Kerala, West Bengal and Kashmir come to the forefront in initiating these reform measures.

Before the formation of the Kerala State the whole land in the state was owned by certain landlords, Devaswoms and by Government. From 1959 onwards a series of Land Reform Acts were passed by the government. The first in this series, The Kerala Agrarian Relation Bill (KARB, 1959),
was introduced by the Communist Ministry. The Communist Party which mobilised the peasants, workers and tenants under their flag on the promise of implementing Land Reforms had a moral obligation to do it. But though the Communist Ministry introduced the Kerala Agrarian Relations Bill (KARB) in 1959, it could not do much regarding the implementation of the Bill as the ministry was removed from power by the Central Government. The KARB envisaged to confer ownership rights, to the tenants and imposition of ceiling on holdings.

Next important Land Reforms Act in this series was the Kerala Land Reforms Act of 1963. This was amended in 1969. The most important objectives of this Act were (a) Abolition of tenancy and conferment of ownership rights to tenants, (b) Ceiling on land holdings and the distribution of surplus land to the landless labourers, (c) Conferment of ownership rights to 'Kudikidappukars'.

It is important to look into the implementation aspect of this problem and the effects of such measures on the agrarian structure. An attempt is made to evaluate the impact of these reforms on the agrarian structure in general and the Scheduled Castes in particular.
The Scheduled Caste and the Scope of the Study

"Like any other country in the world, India is also known to have had a tribal society in prehistoric times. That society neither knew any inequality based on castes, communities or classes, nor did it have any relation of superiority and inferiority between man and woman." But later, after years, one group of the people in the society became lowest both in caste and wealth. Exactly we do not know when and where caste has originated in our society. It is argued that class originated first, on the basis of wealth and then caste emerged. The people who were having more wealth became the highest caste and the people having little or no wealth were treated as the lowest. But another equally strong opinion about the emergence of caste is related to 'Chathur Varnya'.


4. "At the time or before the Chera Empire . . . . . . Class division had started making its appearance . . . . class division however took the form of caste division, those who were in a position to accumulate the greatest amount of wealth came to be considered the highest caste, and so on till we reach the class that is in a position to accumulate no wealth at all which become the lowest caste", Namboodiripad; Kerala Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow, quoted in an article by the same author, "Once again on Caste and Class" Social Scientist, No.103, Dec. 1981, P - 19.
This emphasise that caste originated on the basis of division of labour, the Brhamins - the priest, the Kshethras - the warriors, and the Sudras - the labourers to others. One more caste, the 'Visias' is also there, but it is argued that this group of caste is not found in Kerala. Whatever may be the origin, as time passed one group of people was relegated to the position of slaves in Kerala. They were later came to be known as 'Harijans', or Scheduled Castes. The economic and social life of these people became miserable or even pathetic as they were considered as 'untouchables' or 'polluted castes'. They were not allowed to walk through the public road, and not even take water from a public well. They possessed neither wealth nor status in the society. They were 'poor' in all the sense of the term and worked in the field with empty stomach from dawn to dusk for the benefits of their masters. This they continued unquestioned for years with a sense of dedication and piety. But land the main source of wealth and power was under the control and ownership the Brhamins and Nayars who constituted the caste Hindus of Kerala. The rest of the population who included the artisans and craftsman, the entire labour community and others who attended to the essential services of the village like washerman, barbers, boatman etc., were untouchables of varying ranks and belonged the 'polluting castes'. They possessed little or no land.  

5. Saradhanmoni, K; Emergence of a Slave Caste; Pulayas of Kerala, Peoples Publishing House, New Delhi, 1980, P-14.
The economic upliftment of the weaker sections, particularly the 'Harijans' has been accepted as a policy measure by the Central as well as State Governments and after independence several measures were initiated in this direction. But to what extent these policies benefited them is a point to be evaluated.

In Kerala, according to 1971 census - the total population of scheduled castes comes to about 1.9 lakhs. This constitutes 8.30 percent of the total population in the state. In this study we propose to evaluate the impact of land reforms on these people.

"Land to the tillers" was the underlying idea of land reforms. When this idea was first introduced thousands and thousands of poor peasants hoped that they will become owners of land. But what actually happened was contrary to expectations. The administrative machinery largely failed to achieve the proclaimed objectives. Consequently the real beneficiaries of these reforms happened to be large and medium holders. They are largely middlemen and not 'tillers of the soil' in the true sense of the term. These people cultivate their land with hired labour. In other words the 'actual tillers' of the soil still continue as labourers without enjoying benefits from the land reform measures.

An important aspect of the reform was the implementation of ceiling on holdings and acquisition of surplus land. The law clearly stated that 50 percent of the surplus land acquired should be distributed to the landless scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. Whether this law has been implemented and if so to what extent is the relevant question posed in this study.

Yet another important objective of the land reforms was to 'confer ownership right to the 'Kudikidappukars'. The law states 'the extent shall be subject to a minimum of three cents if within the limits of a city or a major municipality, five cents if within the limits of any other municipality and ten cents if in any panchayat area or township' but instead of abiding the law in several cases, the land owners attempted to evict the 'Kudikidappukars' and wherever they granted ownership rights they tried to give only less than what is required by law. The majority of beneficiaries in this group, no doubt belongs to scheduled caste - mainly because traditionally they were settled in their master's land or they were forced to do so.

To measure the impact of land reforms the following hypotheses are formulated: (a) Any change in the distribution of land alters the agrarian structure and results in changes in income, employment and social life of the people. (b) Distribution of land has resulted in reduction of inequality and (c) The government has failed to distribute land to the real 'tillers of the soil' and so the real beneficiaries happened to be large and or medium holders. These three hypotheses are tested in the succeeding chapters of this work. This is expected to throw light on the impact of land reforms on scheduled castes.

**Methodology**

Data for this study have been collected through a sample survey. The survey was conducted in a village where scheduled caste people have a concentration. 711 households were selected for the purpose of the survey. The survey was conducted on the basis of random sampling and each household in the village has an equal chance to be represented in the sample. Our survey population constituted about 5 percent of the total households in the village.

Secondary data for this study have been collected from various sources. Wherever they occur proper references are given.
The Scheme of the Study

For the purpose of analysis the present study is divided into seven chapters. First chapter introduces the topic. It also disse the methodology adopted for the study.

Second Chapter deals with the theoretical aspects of land reforms.

Chapter III delineates the implementation and effects of the Land Reform measures on the state as a whole.

Chapter IV presents the results of the survey.

Chapter V explains two sample cases of assignment and cancellation of ownership rights.

Chapter VI deals with the pattern of the distribution of income and employment of the scheduled castes, and is trying to find out the impact of land reform measures on these.

Chapter VII presents the conclusions of the study.