CHAPTER II: LAND REFORMS - A THEORETICAL APPROACH
CHAPTER - II

LAND REFORMS - A THEORETICAL APPROACH

Much of human history is dominated by the relationship of man to land. A sense of well being and security is inherent in the ownership of land, and land was used for the exploitation of man by man. The role of land in the growth and development of a nation is very important. In a traditional society land is not thought of something to be bought and sold, but as something to be used communally, according to fixed contents or to be allocated according to a strong hereditary class system. Later, land determined caste class relation and it bestowed power and status to the holder.

Land has many important roles in shaping the structure of a country. First of all land plays an important 'Political Role'. Referring to India, Walter C Nale wrote "The Indian who acquired political power almost inevitably acquired control of land, which was the main source of wealth and income." Of course land is a material concept, but it is a source of wealth and property. Marx said that "the property in the soil is the original source of all wealth and has become a great problem upon the solution of which depends the future of working class." Peter Dorner observes in his book 'In non-industrialised Societies, land represents the principal source of wealth and principal source of economic and political power, the land tenure system reflects social class structure and relations.' Land, in a country like ours, is a major form of holding of wealth and earns income to the owner of land. At the same time it is a form of wealth totally dependent on continuous use of human labour on a large scale to make it economically gainful.

---


Land has a 'Use Value'. Land has mainly two important uses, economic uses and physical uses. The former relates to wealth income etc., and the latter relates to house construction, building construction etc. Besides all these, land has another important role i.e., land is a productive factor, which in turn helps capital formation and ultimately helps to economic development and growth.

Land tenure relations vary from country to country. Each country shows entirely different characteristics of land tenure system. 'Land tenure system reflect specific historical, geographic, economic, social and political conditions'. Land tenure relations is not static one, it will change according to time and situation of the country. All the countries have gone through a specific nature or type of land tenure relations. In India the land tenure relation was mingled with feudalistic characters. Land was owned by a small group and the rest of the workers in the field were either slaves or attached labourers. In Kerala, during the medieval period, the land tenure relation was, as pointed out by EMS Namboodiripad, "Jati-Jammi-Naduvashi-Medhavitham", which is different from feudalism.

7. Dornier, op. cit, P-36.
8. Namboodiripad, EMS, 'Once again on Castes and Class', Social Scientist, No.103, Dec.1981, P-13, wrote it - "the medieval society in Kerala was not feudalism 'but' jati-jammi-naduvashi-medhavitham, which means the domination of the upper castes, the 'Jammites' and local chieftants in Kerala Society."
Changes in the agrarian structure is necessary to change the economic and social systems of a country and such a change will affect the income distribution and production of a country, especially in the agricultural sector. Since land is the most important asset held in agrarian economics, any change in the distribution of land holdings or in rental and wage incomes accruing from each holding, must have significant effects on distribution of income and consumption. Of course a change in the distribution of holding will change the whole structure of the country, particularly a country like ours, where a major part of the national income arises from the agricultural sector. If so what is the proper method to alter the agrarian structure? Economic development is often identified with economic growth and overall development begins with agricultural development. Moreover, agricultural sector contributes capital and labour to other sectors of the economy. The answer to above question is that 'Land Reforms are apt and suitable measure to alter the agrarian structure and land holding. 'Any demand for land reforms is pre-conditioned by the existence of outmoded property and usufructuary relations in the land.'

The relations become outdated when it does not satisfy the needs of contemporary society, its requirements of productive efficiency and norms of distributive justice are more than not integrally linked in a proper perspective of development of most underdeveloped countries aspiring towards rapid planned transformation of their economy and society. Land reforms are policy instruments to alter the agrarian structure. It helps to reduce the monopolistic power on land by landlords, and also a better method to abolish or even change the feudalistic nature of the sector. To the Galbraith words 'Land reforms is a revolutionary step; it passes power, property and status from one group in the community to another.' In Dornier's opinion - Land reforms are often viewed as an instrument for the achievement of greater equity and social justice. It has a dual purpose of serving both as a redistributive instrument and for achieving increased productivity. As a redistributive instrument land reforms helps to reduce the inequalities in the wealth distribution, consumption and so on. It helps to mechanise agricultural sector which leads to scientific


and developed cultivation and production. In the case of productivity side, when re-distribution is taking place, the incentive to produce more increases and this will naturally help to satisfy the need for more food. And again, consumption and the savings of the people will increase. Thus investment in other sectors of the economy and overall development takes place. In short 'the central idea underlying the land reform measures was that agricultural income must be substantially raised and there after maintained on a higher level not as a mere largesse to the farmer but as a means of improving the stability of the whole economic system and promoting the state's economic progress. Land reforms help to reduce poverty and disparity between urban and rural areas. Employment opportunities increase, and rural development takes place. Increase in the standard of living of the people, education and cultural development, social development as a whole are the results of such measures. Finally 'Land reforms has a place in the growth and development of democratic institutions .... and in a democracy a wide diffusion of rights in land or an opportunity to acquire such rights is believed an essential force making for individual freedom and creative individualism.'

13. Ibid, P-60.
There are so many obstacles to the proper implementation of land reforms. "The economic and political power associated with landed interests is one of the key obstacles to land reform which inevitably involves tough political decisions and confrontations."\(^{14}\) Again Dorner\(^{15}\) mentions two important types of obstacles to the proper implementation of the measures, such as Internal and External obstacles. Under internal obstacles there may be lack of organisations (peasants, tenants, share croppers etc.), ineffective legislation, lack of specific criteria for land taking procedures with resulting delays in legislation, financial problems, etc. Under external obstacles there may be lack of foreign financial assistance in time, in certain cases land and other agricultural enterprises owned or controlled by foreign interests etc. Of course, in actual practice, proper implementation of the land reform measures is very difficult. This might be due to the above said facts.

In India, soon after independence, mass agitations were organised against the existing land tenure system. So all the state governments and the Planning Commission gave more importance to land reform measures. In Kerala, also a

\(^{14}\) Dorner, op.cit, P.29.

\(^{15}\) See, Ibid, pp. 29-33.
series of land reform measures were implemented by the
government based on several objectives. It will be interest-
ing to look into the implementation of these Acts, its
progress and the overall effects.