Chapter VIII

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[A brief summary of the findings is provided. Some research and policy implications for future are mentioned.]

The combination of an intense demand for rapid growth and existence of severe obstacles to growth are the sources of profound social and political tensions in modern developing countries. But, if the efforts in this direction are realised with success, rising the economic standard of the masses, these social and political tensions subside. The test of the time for any programme thus becomes an economic one. The present study aims at testing the policy of land reform mainly from this economic angle.

The argument and analysis so far developed indicate that land reform is not a constraint in the development of agrarian sector. Thus the reason for the backwardness of Indian agrarian structure as stated generally lies somewhere else. The recent (Dec. 1991) national level seminar on land reform held in the National Institute for Rural Development at Hyderabad evoked much discussion in this regard. Almost all the participants, who included many doyens in the field, echoed this opinion. It is
stated that there is no significant economies of scale within Indian agriculture today just as 40 years ago. There is no reason to believe that small farmers and for that matter land reforms acted as a constraint to development.

The present study substantiates this view point. The study clearly indicates that landreform has initiated a positive step towards development among all types of farmers, whether small or large or whether they belong to the erstwhile landlord or tenant class.

The economic indicators of the agrarian economy vis–vis landreform has shown a sign of development and growth. The degree of growth might have resulted in certain disparities, but the direction should not be mistaken. As our findings reveal, the shift to commercial crop, or increase in employment generation, etc are all for a better future in the agricultural sector.

The study has proved a particular point that landreform backed by a credit policy can lead to growth in the right direction. The district in which the study is carried out records two distinct features: (i) It had experienced a high level of implementation of tenancy laws. (ii) It is a
district with the largest number of operating commercial banks. More than 400 branches are spread all over the district, which is the highest in India excluding the urban centres. These two factors are not without mutual impact. The extended credit facility is one of the prime reasons for the all-round development of all types of farmers irrespective of size class or tenurial condition.

This leads to conclude safely that landreform program should have a well designed and imaginative economic action (more of a credit) as a follow up measure to augment the yield rate and net value added to the poor farmer. The instance of this district may not be a conscious effort of government or any other agency but a mere chance occurrence. But let one not fail to learn from this fortunate coincidence.

The sectoral variation in the income earned particularly in the agricultural labour class indicates that the labourers after the reform earn more from other sectors, if given a chance. Actually landreform has caused an increase in the per-acre labour intake among all farmers. The shift of agricultural labourers to other modes of employment in fact appears to be a consequence of exercising an option rather than trodding a compulsory path. A few
specific contributing causes for this phenomenon may be stated as follows:

(i) Availability of a more lucrative employment, particularly beedi rolling.

(ii) The greater physical strain involved in agricultural work which deters a substantial proportion of younger generation from it.

(iii) A rise in the literacy rate in the district.

A cautious view should be taken regarding the trend towards growing commercialisation. The rate of farmers opting for commercial crop is alarming. If this trend is not checked, there may be a scarcity of food grains in the country like the problem faced by many of the African nations today. It has to be remembered that the district which was a traditional exporter of rice, the staple food of the region, is an importer today. Anyhow landreform has given an option to the farmer the choice of crop, which has increased his income. This is a sign of positive growth.

The changing economic scenario has brought about substantial social changes as well. The social tensions witnessed in the initial stages of reform have however subsided over the years. The reform has given social security to the lower strata of the society. The uncertain
future due to insecure ownership is no more a nightmare to the tenant. He is more relaxed and socially secure. Thus the reform has brought about the most desired social change which is a pre-requisite for any development.

The rift between the landlords and tenants which was high in the initial stages of implementation has now fizzled out. The respondents, independent of their tenurial status, have generally expressed that land reform is a progressive step socially and economically. Social harmony is restored together with decreased social inequality.

At the same time, a few cultural aspects of traditional social life have suffered a setback. The folk culture in particular traces much of its origin and survival to the landlord and tenant system. To name a few 'Bhoota-Kola', 'Ati kelenja' 'Jogi' and 'Madira' were based on patronage by landlords. 'Bhoota Kola' the traditional devil dance unique to the region, is exquisite as an art. After the land reform the patronage of landlords is lost and the art is losing support. The communities like Pambadas, Parvas, and Nalike, which performed these traditional dances and depended mainly on them for livelihood are now forced to take up alternative occupations. Anyhow, due to the religious fervour attached to this art, it has survived.
If is relevant to recall the role of non-governmental organisations here. For instance, the role played by the Srikshetra Dharmasthala Rural Development Centre in Belthangadi Taluk. The centre is organising annual 'Melas' or Jatras for the rural people in different parts of the taluk since 1984. Various competitions are also held in these Melas. Local farmers are encouraged to participate in competitions involving village crafts like 'Mudi' knitting, basket and pot making. Popular games like buffalo race are conducted. Cultural shows include 'Atikelenja' and 'Madira' which provide rural people an opportunity to preserve their art and folk culture. Equally important and economically contributing are the prizes given to the top ranking farmers. Demonstrations of modern methods of farming, use of fertilizers and of energy conservation methods are held.

Thus the role played by this Centre is note-worthy. The Centre has evolved its programme as land based for which a high rate of implementation of landreform is a pre-requisite. In the later stage if such suitable supportive measures are adopted to a given agro-climatic system, landreform will prove to be the springboard for future development.
The analysis up to now has indicated the development in the economy of the region due to landreform. But there are several other factors which helped this growth which are unique to this district. Some of these are:

(i) A well developed banking and cooperative credit system,
(ii) Active role of grass root level political organisation of the peasants, much inspired by the experience of neighbouring Kerala state.
(iii) The climatic conditions of the region with an assured rain fall.
(iv) Employment in outside places like in Bombay and Gulf countries which inject a significant amount of money into the economy (in addition to the beeding rolling industry).
(v) The high level of literacy.

A well developed credit market is a pre-requisite for any development especially in the capital starved agrarian economy. A well developed banking and cooperative credit system provides an impetus to small and marginal farmers. The importance of such institution is well known.

Second there has been a proximity impact of Kerala, which inspired the poor peasants to form their organisations supported by the communist parties. The neighbouring state of Kerala provided a good example to follow. Besides, there
is much reciprocity in social and economic fronts with the people of the neighbouring Kasaragod Taluk. This resulted in intimate exchange of views across the border among the peasants. The experiences are shared, resulting in stronger grass-root organisations of the tenant class. These organised tenants were responsible for better implementation of landreform laws in the district. Many cases have been fought together by the tenants as the upper caste landlords joined hands.

Third the regular monsoon and high rainfall guarantee at least one crop per year, even without other irrigational facilities. This makes the poor tenant less dependent on landlord after reform, though he did not own irrigational facilities. He is assured of at least one crop which he is no more to share. Earlier even if he grew 2 or three crops with the irrigational facilities provided by the landlord, the high rent didn't leave much for him. Infact by becoming the owner he is left with more in one crop than what would have been saved with two or three crops earlier.

The relatively high level of schooling makes the younger generation to go out of the district, particularly to Bombay and Gulf countries and earn a handsome income. This permits an inflow of cash to the district. The
injection of additional cash into the society almost coinciding with the time of reform provided sustaining capacity to small and marginal farmers. Added to this, these subsidiary incomes helped the farmers to develop their farm and cultivation methods.

All these factors coupled with a high literacy rate made landreform a success on the economic front. Thus a straight generalisation to other districts like Gulbarga or Bellary may not be valid in terms of success of landreform where all these factors are fundamentally different.

Together with a positive impact, landreform has inflicted certain micro level ill effects like that suffered by folk culture. A few families who were totally dependent on land have lost their only support. These families had to frantically look for alternatives and migrate elsewhere. Such cases would not be included in the present sample. A special case study of such families may be rewarding.

Religious institutions like mutts owned a sizable area of leased out land. Reform has made many temples and mutts to lose this income support. For a decisive opinion, the issue needs an indepth study.
The fairly successful landreform in the district is the net effect of alternative factors operating in the economy rather than a performance by it alone. It also has left certain scars in the system at particular levels, which may not be of much significance in general. Nevertheless these deserve a careful study and analysis.

On the whole landreform has brought about desired social change and its economic impact is also in the right direction. It should be mentioned that land reform should not be taken in isolation for any judgement upon it. It should be viewed from the historical perspective of a given society and required supportive measures should be provided in the area. Without necessary feedback measures and other development programmes, one should not expect just land reform to bring about allround development. It cannot be a cure for all the diseases of our agrarian economy. Let land reform be considered as a beginning of growth, providing the right base for future development programmes.

SCOPE FOR FUTURE WORK:

The study indicates that there are no inbuilt defects in the land reform measures to degrade an agrarian economy. As mentioned in Chap IV, the degenerative condition of agricultural worker should be attributed to other reasons
which call for investigation. In this set up we may state a few corollaries of the present work under the following heads.

(a) Policy implications,
(b) Research implications.

These two descriptions are not mutually exclusive and are only for convenience of presentation. The guidelines which may be incorporated into policy decisions of the government are mentioned under (a), while the topics which deserve further research focus are stated in (b).

(a) **Policy Implications**: The nongovernmental organisations, preferably a local body, should be involved in reform programmes. These may be channelled through such organisations with the government exercising financial control and supervision.

(2) The ecological considerations should be incorporated in all development programmes. Policies like land reform need greater attention in this regard. Such programmes which are directly related to the ecological issues need greater ecological planning so as to ensure sustainability and growth.

(3) It is time to rethink about the policy of encouraging commercial crops in the place of food grain production as a
measure of development. Shifting to commercial crops should be discouraged keeping in view the long term perspective.

(4) Land reform should be considered only as a beginning in the development process. It is a basic requirement for rural development. Other land based programmes should be integrated with it. The process of development should be envisaged on these lines and the success of land reform should not be ascertained by measuring the level of implementation alone.

(5) Credit facilities should be intricately connected to land reform programmes, along with personnel to supervise its productive utilisation with priority to small and marginal farmers.

(6) A concerted effort should be made to break the power concentration in the hands of a few influential and dominant sections of the rural society. This will ensure greater economic progress particularly in the lower rural strata.

(b) Research Implications:

A few potential areas for future research work are as follows:

(1) Feasibility of involving voluntary organisations at the implementation level in land reform.
(2) Ecological implications of land reform. Some specific areas are:

(a) The role of property rights and land tenure system in soil erosion.

(b) Institutional nature of land holding and economic constraints in reversing land degradation.

(c) Tenurial system, land reform and long run social cost-benefit analysis.

(d) Small and fragmented holdings and the constraints in land and water management.

(e) Land reform and commercial cropping.

(3) Socio-cultural impact of abolition of tenurial system. The case of folk arts may be examined in particular. A study of the present status of the communities who were traditionally the folk dancers namely - Pambadas, Paravas, Nalike may be undertaken.

It must be emphasized that 21st century cannot be ushered in rural India with outdated agrarian relations. The present century should be viewed as a period of transition, land reform initiating changes in the desirable direction. The feudal system has been broken, yet it carries with it the semi-feudal characters which inhibit economic development and social progress.
Land reform has provided a good beginning. It has averted a revolution, providing an evolutionary change. But until now it has been conceived and implemented in an isolated manner without relating it to rural development and poverty alleviation programmes. It has never been in the mainstream of developmental activity. A definite direction should be given towards integrating land reform with anti-poverty programmes.

A majority of Indian rural development programmes are land based for which land holding is a basic requirement. Organic links must be forged between land reforms and various agricultural development programmes.

It is to be remembered that blaming land reform as a failure by examining it in isolation is not fair. Let land reform be the pivot around which other asset formation and income generating activities be developed. Only then the crusade against rural poverty will yield fruitful results. In the changing modern world the crucial test for any policy is economic. It decides whether a policy is right or wise. It is apparent that land reform will stand such a test in the course of time.
[ Even as the struggles for land have been growing in intensity in vast parts of the country, the issue of land reform appears to have been sidelined in development planning and policy. Such contradictory trends calls for reassessment of the role of land reforms and its impact on agriculture and Rural Development ]

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