India's land system underwent far-reaching changes under the impact of the British rule as we have noted in the second chapter. The changes were brought about primarily with the intention of perpetuating the Empire's command over land revenue. Private property in land came to be formally recognised by law and the system instituted under the British created a set of intermediaries who became the link between the peasantry and the government. The intermediaries who were a class of loyal retainers provided the much needed security and also the revenue for the British. The evolution of private landed property as a formally recognised legal institution under the British put in place a highly iniquitous system of land relations.\footnote{A.Vaidyanathan, "Performance of Indian Agriculture Since Independence", in Kaushik Basu (Ed.), *Agrarian Questions*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2000, p-57.}

Land Revenue being the main objective under the British system, its maximisation also called for strengthening the feudal system as both enter into a symbiotic relationship. Thus the British system was compatible with and co-existed with feudal and semi-feudal relationship in the countryside. There were no serious efforts to reform the land holding structure. Even as markets and exchange grew leading to commercialisation and commodity production for the markets, the capitalist production relations were sought to be super-imposed over feudal social relations. We shall see that this was in contrast with the programme of national development independent of colonial rule, wherein there was general agreement on the need for altering the agrarian relations for ensuring economic development.

It has been seen that in the pre-independence era the British had a coherent
strategy aimed at their own development at the expense of the Indian masses. Their strategy of extracting revenue and raw materials led to industrial development in the metropolitan centre. This was simultaneously accompanied by falling food availability and famines for Indian people and the condition of the rural population under the colonial policy was one of extreme indebtedness, heightened poverty and starvation. There was hardly any vision for agricultural and rural development and the British policy was to limit the involvement of the government in the classic laissez-faire tradition and it was only a series of famines, culminating in the nefarious Bengal Famine of 1943 that led the British to lay the foundation of agricultural administration, rural development, rural credit, Land Reforms and rural local government.²

The agrarian structure at the time of Indian independence was marked by highly unequal land relations with land being concentrated mostly in the hands of the few landlords while the peasantry reeled under demands for land revenue, innumerable illegal exactions and rents of a feudal nature, debt and untold misery. Relatively large land owners dominated the land holdings which were cultivated with the help of tenants or wage-labourers. The peasants lacked security of tenure and were under a constant threat of eviction and a crisis of subsistence. Agricultural stagnation was caused by the continuance of archaic land relations, integration of India with the world economy and the vagaries of free trade, lack of investment in irrigation and other infrastructure and the policies of land revenue and the operation of merchant-usurer capital. Agricultural production was at a standstill and the policy of free trade had also retarded any chance of rural industries. Infrastructure, transport, electricity and irrigational development were also at a nascent stage thereby ensuring the de-linking of agriculture from the rest of the economy. The caste hierarchies perpetuated and the feudal landlords wielded power over the impoverished majority of the peasantry. Chronic unemployment and underemployment coupled with indebtedness and the spectre of the

merchant-usurer capital loomed large over the rural countryside.3

The operation of uncontrolled markets and the world agricultural depression which led to pauperisation of peasants through falling terms of trade, the World War, deficit financed war expenditures and rapidly rising price of food grains in the two decades before independence lead to a major crisis having a devastating effect on the livelihoods of the people.4 It is a stark reality that "the British never fully conceptualized a program of rural economic development that would combine, simultaneously, emphases on investment in rural infrastructure, scientific agriculture and the transformation of the traditional hierarchy of interests in land so as to enable the actual tillers of the soil to adopt new methods of production and, at the same time, to enhance their own well-being."5

Political independence, although, did not change overnight the agrarian situation, it set in motion a process which through a planned economy and extensive state intervention intended to stimulate capital accumulation for capitalist development. The nationalist development strategy also included Land Reforms which although in a limited way led to the development of capitalist relations in agriculture. The colonial experience as we have seen has ensured a marked divergence in the transition to capitalist development when compared to the experience of the 'classical' West European case. An economic environment conducive to rural economic development and welfare was seen as intrinsically linked to the altering of the distribution of rights in land and transformation of the rural hierarchy of land relations. Hence, the iniquitous agrarian structure which is inimical to the development of capitalist relations in agriculture was sought to be corrected by the implementation of Land Reforms measures that we shall look into in detail later.

The reversal of the colonial legacy of agricultural stagnation was to be a primary

objective of economic planning initiated in independent India. Michael Kalecki argued for development planning as an essential instrument which underdeveloped economies could ill afford to ignore. A state just emerging out of the colonial rule which is intending to chalk out a capitalist path cannot but promote at its own behest large scale accumulation and decide the course of such accumulation with the intention of capitalist development. It hence, has to play the role of the mobiliser of investible funds and also the chief investor in the development of a huge public sector prepared for capitalist development. The Indian capitalist class made efforts to strengthen and consolidate itself and sought to overcome the market constraints arising from the agrarian structure, through large scale state expenditure.

Keynesianism returned in an influential manner in Indian planning and the First Five Year Plan (1951-56) was a simple variant of the Harrod-Domar growth model. The influence of Keynesianism as also the Soviet experience and the experience of the New deal in the USA gave rise to the trend of seeking state intervention as opposed to a free unrestricted run for the market forces that the laissez faire doctrine envisaged. The plan process was influenced in its direction by past experience of the operation of the unfettered market and the devastating effect it had on the people's livelihoods and the architects of the Plan like P.C.Mahalanobis realised the necessity of regulating markets, planning for growth and the need for emphasis on food self-sufficiency which emerged as the basic features of the dirigiste (directed, or guided) strategy that they formulated. The strategy of development employed between the 1950s to the 1990 has been termed

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7 Terence J Byres (Ed.), The State and Development Planning in India, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1994, p-32.
as the *Dirigiste* Development Strategy.\(^{11}\)

The Indian Statistical Institute had undertaken a study of the after-effects of the Bengal famine under the direction of Mahalanobis.\(^{12}\) The deleterious impact of free trade on people’s livelihood came across as a stark reality and this factor had a significant impact on the future thinking of Mahalanobis. In addition, Mahalanobis’s strategy that set the base for Indian planning was essentially against free trade and free markets, influenced as it was by Keynesian belief in the efficacy of state intervention, admiration for the Soviet planning (His ideas on economic development were under influence of the work of a Soviet economist by name Feldman) and his social vision of the elimination of poverty and unemployment in the mould of Fabian socialism.\(^{13}\) Although traces of influence of Keynes, Feldman and others are discernible, Mahalanobis had a far greater vision which paved way for a distinct independent nationalist development strategy.

The *dirigiste* strategy followed in India was different from Soviet Planning, yet the detractors of state intervention called the entire process Socialist unmindful of the fact that a country like Japan had set up state-run industries about a century ago. Opposition to the *dirigiste* strategy came from those who articulate positions held by the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organisation trinity in the present day.\(^{14}\) Especially the insulation of domestic production from international price fluctuations due to the practice of screening requests for imports according to the ‘indigenous availability’ criterion which ensured that any good that could be produced in India were denied import licences has led some to go to the extent of claiming that the ‘Stalinist’ policy of protection was wholly responsible for the failure to industrialise ‘efficiently’.\(^{15}\) The policy of protection and import substituting industrialisation also ensured that Indian

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\(^{14}\) This position has been articulated by people like Jagdish Bhagwati, Deepak Lal, Ashok Gulati and others.

industry and agriculture are not exposed to the vagaries of free market economy. This aspect assumes all the more relevance in the wake of the recent liberal economic policies and the exposure of the Indian produce to the ever fluctuating prices in the world market.

The First Plan Draft Outline had a chapter titled ‘Reorganisation of Agriculture’ which noted the inability of agriculture to meet the demands of a rapidly growing population and diagnosed the existent agrarian situation as follows:

The problems of Indian agriculture are far more fundamental than is commonly appreciated. This is apparent, for instance, from the fact that, in recent years, in spite of high prices, public investment on a scale never attempted before, and legislation designed to give greater security to the tiller, there have been no marked gains in production.... Many of the weaknesses of Indian agriculture are inherent in the structure of the rural economy.... The bulk of the agricultural producers live on the margin and are unable to invest in the improvement of the land. There is widespread underemployment... and the economy cannot provide and sustain continuous employment for the available labour.... The conditions are typical of a static, backward economy, which is unable to expand and keep pace with the growing population.\textsuperscript{16}(Planning Commission, 1951:94)

This was an appropriate analysis of the Indian situation and any rectification in the situation was directly linked to the redistribution of wealth and resources and required certain drastic measures. This situation of agriculture and agrarian relations in the post-1950 period was subjected to three types of exogenous influence namely:

(i). direct intervention in agrarian relations in the form of Land Reform legislation with a particular content and objective; (ii) initiation of a 'new agricultural strategy' from 1960 promoting modern technology; and (iii) the indirect effects of an expanding domestic market for agricultural products, as a result of large scale state expenditures...which led to an inflation in foodgrain prices outstripping inflation in prices of other goods.\textsuperscript{17}

Transformation in the distribution of rights in land and the fostering of an economic environment conducive to rural economic development and welfare are closely linked. “A programme of rural economic development must hence combine simultaneously, emphases on investment in rural infrastructure, scientific agriculture and the transformation of the traditional hierarchy of interests in land


so as to enable the actual tillers of the soil to adopt new methods of production and, at the same time enhance their own well-being."

The Land Reforms were thus accompanied with updated agricultural technology and huge investment in irrigation and other infrastructure as a part of the overall planned development. This policy had accelerated the agricultural output in the fifties and it registered a growth rate of 3.3 per cent which was a significant increase when compared to the infinitesimal rate of less than 1 per cent under the first five decades of the twentieth century. However, the domestic output of food grains started stagnating by the beginning of the sixties forcing the country to rely upon food imports in large quantities. The inability of the Land Reforms to make any drastic alteration in the concentration of landholding led to a situation wherein the rent-barrier acted as a proximate factor inhibiting private investment and consequently the high productivity achieved in the early years were rendered unsustainable. This was because a high proportion of income was usurped by the parasitic landlords, acting as a deterrent to capital formation because the actual cultivators were left with neither the surplus required for investment for agricultural development, nor the incentive to enhance productivity. The Government we shall see adopted the 'New Agricultural Strategy' to overcome the rent-barrier and enhance productivity as the Strategy allowed for multiple cropping and hence increase in the gross sown area which could initially overcome the profit squeeze.

Kalecki had forecast way back in 1952 that the financing of state investment in an India-type economy would result in inflation, because firstly, the class basis of the state would ensure that the landlords, traders and industrialists would not be taxed and neither would resources be raised to the required extent from them, while the reliance would be on indirect taxation of the masses and forced savings and secondly, the absence of effective Land Reforms severely constrained the

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production of wage goods. \(^{20}\) A proper strategy was devised for capitalist development at the behest of the Indian state through large scale state investment especially from the Second Five Year Plan onwards. \(^{21}\) Kalecki’s prediction was proved right with the aggravated inflationary spiral that was initiated from the mid-1960s with the slowing down of agricultural growth that continues to this day. \(^{22}\)

The Third Plan which aimed a five per cent annual growth rate failed in its objective with the economy growing only at a rate of 2.4 per cent leading to stagnant per capita incomes and a debacle in the objective of achieving self-sufficiency in food production. \(^{23}\) Successive monsoon failures in 1965 and 1966 burdened agriculture which already showed signs of stagnation, and led to a fall in agricultural output by 17 per cent and foodgrain output by 20 per cent. The rate of inflation also shot up to 12 per cent per annum between 1965 and 1968 and food prices rose nearly at the rate of 20 per cent per annum. The inflationary pressures and the crisis that gripped the economy by the mid-sixties rapidly changed India’s reputation as a model developing country to a ‘basket case’. \(^{24}\)

The crisis situation and the adverse balance of payment situation and increased reliance on foreign aid and food imports led to a vulnerable situation wherein the USA which was the largest donor suspended its aid citing the Indo-Pak War and the PL-480 wheat loan was also not renewed on a long-term basis, in order to pressurise India to accept the World Bank-IMF policies. Liberalisation in trade and industrial controls, devaluation of the rupee and the adoption of a new agricultural strategy were some of the measures suggested. \(^{25}\) The first two measures would fall under the exogenous influence that the Indian economy was subjected to; with its


\(^{21}\) Cf, Terence J. Byres(Ed), *The State and Development Planning in India*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1994 and a later revised edition *The State, Development Planning and Liberalisation in India*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1998.

\(^{22}\) Cf, Sukhamoy Chakravarty, “M.Kalecki and Development Economics” in his *Writing on Development*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1998, pp-113-125, for a detailed discussion of Kalecki’s views on development economics.


\(^{24}\) Op.Cit, Bipan Chandra, Aditya Mukherjee and Mridula Mukherjee, 2000, p-351.

\(^{25}\) Ibid, pp-351-373.
influence also on the agricultural sector and the dependence on foreign powers for food and finance to offset the inadequacy of resources to fund India's ambitious heavy industry strategy led to a phase of partial liberalisation in the mid sixties. The depleting foreign exchange reserves with the increased import of capital goods in line with the Second Plan's thrust to industrialise, food shortages and the inflationary tendencies that Kalecki had warned about led to foreign pressures and intervention in policy decisions.26 This period although a brief one, was the first foray of independent India into the policies of economic liberalism that had been set aside after the end of the British colonial rule.

The predominant policies that existed under the *dirigiste* development strategy was a sharp deviation from the policies based on the principles of economic liberalism followed under the British and the objective of self-reliance and self-sufficiency in both foodgrains and raw materials was its central concern. Land Reforms (although its implementation was qualitatively different in different parts of the country as we shall see in the case of Kerala and Andhra Pradesh) and land-augmenting technology was accompanied by infrastructural support. Agricultural extension, irrigational facilities, rural electrification, a network of cooperative institutions, institutional finance and credit facilities for productive purposes, support to supplementary farming operations, Public Distribution System for disbursal of foodgrains to ensure food security, a delivery system to reach modern agricultural inputs to all the villages, decentralisation, adequate marketing and procurement facilities, food for work and various employment generation schemes were an integral part of the rural development policy that was pursued during the four decades after independence. The efficacy of these measures and the extent to which there was actual action at the ground level may be debatable and our study makes an effort to look into these issues.

The concept of unrestricted markets was done away with and a system of regulated marketing and a regime of administered prices was implemented to put an end to

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fraudulent marketing practices and to reduce prices of food and other necessities like medicines.\textsuperscript{27} The dirigiste strategy saw a comprehensive package of community development programmes like Intensive Agricultural Development Programme (IADP) which targeted a few districts and through extension services and intensive input usage sought to generate growth impulses in the surrounding areas, employment generation programmes, cooperation, decentralisation, price and market regulations and credit policies.\textsuperscript{28} The First Plan was the first attempt at a comprehensive strategy of agricultural planning in India. It recommended a system known as Cooperative Village Management Scheme which in itself was a decentralised system imbibing the features of both collective farming and cooperative farming.\textsuperscript{29} Rural anti-poverty and employment generation programmes were also given priority and the development investments made especially in the National Rural Employment Programme (NREP), the Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP) and the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) have generated employment opportunities and people benefited in the form of employment opportunities, income generation and marginally raising the poor above poverty line.\textsuperscript{30}

It has been identified that without altering the land relations there can be no full fledged capitalist development. This ensured that from the first flush after independence and even before Land Reforms have been a matter of intense debate among the policy makers. The First Planning Commission also realised the "justification for effecting, as early as possible, radical changes in the structure of the rural economy" and the Planning Commission set up, in 1955, a Panel on Land Reforms.\textsuperscript{31} Indian policy makers did not make a complete reversal of their pre-

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{29} Op.Cit, V.M.Dandekar, 1994, p-50.
\item\textsuperscript{31} Ibid, p-74.
\end{itemize}
independence resolve in favour of Land Reforms unlike Pakistan which saw the peculiar happening of the ruling classes banning the possession or publication of the pre-independence manifesto of the Muslim League which spoke of Land Reforms. The Five Year Plans also discussed the question of Land Reform and made assessment of the policies from time to time. However, the efficacy of the reforms implemented and the diverse experiences of different regions is something that merits a detailed study. The following section will broadly deal with the experience of Land Reform in India. The third chapter will deal in detail about the specific experiences of Kerala and Andhra Pradesh, the two states where we have conducted our study.

Land Reforms:

My land is my backbone... I only stand straight, happy, proud and not ashamed of my colour because I still have land. I can dance, paint, create and sing as my ancestors did before me.... My land is my foundation. I stand, live and perform as long as I have something firm and hard to stand on. Without land,... we will be the lowest people in the world, because you have broken our backbone, took away my arts, history and foundation. You have left us nothing.

The quote mentioned above although is attributed to an Australian Aborigine aptly sums up the situation that the Indian society was placed in after the British colonial rule and underlines the seminal importance of land in raising the self-esteem of an oppressed peasant and as the key to later development. Land Reforms hence could not be ignored if a transformation from the scenario under British rule to one of agricultural development was required to be made.

It is often mentioned that Land Reforms have been on the agenda of policy makers from time immemorial and there have been authors who have traced it back to the Athenian statesman Solon who in sixth century BC sought to regulate the accumulation of land in the hands of the rich, Imperial China which in the seventh century BC made unsuccessful attempts to introduce Land Reforms and.

in the third century BC by the Roman Statesman Tiberius who attempted it in favour of small holders also without much success. Theodor Bergmann has gone to the extent of suggesting that agrarian reforms were first formulated as a law in the Bible, third book of Moses which states: "After seven times seven years a year of redemption follows, when all land goes back to the tiller without compensation to the moneylender or landlord." Theodor Bergmann has gone to the extent of suggesting that agrarian reforms were first formulated as a law in the Bible, third book of Moses which states: "After seven times seven years a year of redemption follows, when all land goes back to the tiller without compensation to the moneylender or landlord." 35 We would however, take the French Revolution as our reference point as far as Land Reforms in the modern sense is concerned. The revolutionary transformation of land is considered a necessary pre-condition of and a concomitant of a liberal bourgeois democratic set-up. Radical Land Reforms came to be implemented for the first time after the French Revolution when land was confiscated and distributed to beneficiaries without compensating the feudal landlords. The Revolution abolished feudalism under pressure from the peasantry and Jacobinism, the combination of which "pushed agrarian reform beyond the point where champions of capitalist development would have wished it to stop." The number of peasant owners increased by over fifty per cent and about two and a half million benefited from the Reforms. This can be considered to be a genuine case of "redistributive" Land Reforms.

In England under Henry VII, there was a ruthless sweeping away of all "historically inherited relations" in a revolutionary, violent manner, in favour of the landlords, "it was practised on the masses of the peasants, who were taxed to exhaustion, driven from the villages; evicted, and who died out or emigrated." The influence of the French Revolution was quite far reaching, unmatched in its revolutionary content by any of the Reforms implemented by the other European countries, which rather followed a conservative path.

35 Theodor Bergmann, Agrarian Reform In India, Agricole Publishing Academy, New Delhi, 1984, p-4.
37 Ibid, p-189.
Lenin speaks of two paths of bourgeois development namely the Prussian path and the American path. The Prussian model is evolutionary in nature wherein, the feudal landlord economy slowly emerges into bourgeois, Junker landlord economy. The American model is one where there is no landlord economy, or it is broken up by revolution, which confiscates, splits up the feudal estates and transforms it into small bourgeois farms. The role of creating new agrarian relationships to suit capitalist mode of production was played by the “American General Redistribution”, by the Anti-Rent Movement, the Homestead Act, etc. The Prussian Junker model only turned the feudal landlords into capitalist farmers and the serfs were transformed into hired labourers. Here there was no alteration in the concentration of land and the Junkers continued to “operate with peasants ‘liberated’ from serfdom- and from land". Even what is known as Japan’s ‘enlightened landlordism’ and their experience in the early twentieth century like the Prussian model tried to address the peasant question without carrying out an anti-feudal revolution and failed to democratise the rural social structure.

The Agrarian Programme of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party adopted at the Stockholm Congress in April 1906 was a significant document which accorded recognition to the confiscation of privately owned lands and landlords’ estates and recognised resolutely the path of peasant agrarian revolution. It called for the conversion of the confiscated lands into public property (nationalisation of forests, waters and lands for colonisation, and municipalisation of privately owned lands), “at any rate in the event of the ‘victorious development of the revolution’. In the event of ‘unfavourable conditions’, the principle of dividing the landlords’ lands among the peasants as private property is adopted.” Thereby, a dual system of private ownership of land through redistribution and public ownership in the form of municipalisation and nationalisation was provided for.

Revolution gave a new meaning to Land Reforms and the Decree on Land which put in practice the above Agrarian Programme stated:

*Private ownership of land shall be abolished for ever: land shall not be sold, purchased, leased, mortgaged, or otherwise alienated... All land, whether state, crown, monastery, church, factory, entailed, private, public, peasant, etc., shall be confiscated without compensation and become the property of the whole people, and pass into the hands of those who cultivate it... Land tenure shall be on an equality basis, i.e., the land shall be distributed among the working people in conformity with a labour standard or a subsistence standard, depending on local conditions... All land when alienated, shall become part of the national land fund. Its distribution among the peasants shall be in charge of the local and central self-government bodies... the land fund shall be subject to periodical redistribution. (Emphasis as in the Decree on Land).*

The People's Republic of China under Mao implemented redistributive Reforms similar to the French Revolution but it was accompanied by collectivisation through the organisation of mutual-aid teams and producer cooperatives. The Occupational Forces in Countries like Japan, Korea etc., implemented Land Reforms from above making sweeping changes. This has led to the unleashing of productive forces and the development of capitalism in agriculture in these countries was accelerated. Land Reforms although has come to be seen as a part of the Socialist vocabulary is in reality not a Socialist demand; it is rather an essential programme of a bourgeois democratic revolution that envisages to bring about a transition from feudalism to capitalism. In the epoch of bourgeois revolution Lenin noted that “the objective conditions compel the ‘radical bourgeois’ to be courageous” and that “courage” according to him, involved support of radical Land Reform to “solve the historical problem of the given period”, i.e. the elimination of the feudal system. However, the radical content of the bourgeoisie is often diluted and the democratic revolution is not carried to its logical conclusion. The Indian experience of Land Reform is more in the evolutionary,

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redistributive framework and has not been able to alter the concentration of land in a major way.

The story of reforms is incomplete without the story of struggles and so we have the peasant struggles preceding most of the actual reforms which took place, from the early peasant struggles in Imperial China to the Russian and Chinese struggles under the influence of communism which ensured the implementation of radical Land Reforms. The Indian experience (specific experiences of peasant struggles in Kerala and Andhra Pradesh will be dealt with in the third chapter) is no different; peasant struggles preceded the implementation of Land Reforms, whatever their efficacy may be. The experiences of Western countries and that of countries like Japan and Korea are characteristically different and were implemented from above without any movement at the ground level under the anticipation of a ‘communist threat’ in most cases.

In the case of India we shall note there has been no single all encompassing pan-Indian movement of the peasantry. There were many movements which we shall study in this chapter and the next chapter. The nature of peasant struggles and the demands espoused also varied and there was no single concrete Charter or Manifesto. Some movements were on the immediate demands of higher wages, security of tenure, higher share of produce etc, while certain struggles were of a far more radical nature aimed at overthrow of feudalism. The Malabar Rebellion was against illegal evictions and exactions and high land revenue, Tebhaga movement demanded more share and a fixing of two third share and so on. It was however the Telangana movement which is considered to be the most revolutionary upsurge in India and it aimed at overthrow of feudalism and also achieved limited success. The gains of the Telangana movement like in the case of the French Revolution were rolled back with the coming to power of a bourgeois-landlord state. The Indian state however was forced to incorporate the question of Land Reforms in its national development strategy. We shall look into the movements
and Land Reforms in the following sections.

The Indian National Movement essentially had been anti-imperialist and anti-feudal in nature and the political leadership debated on the issue of Land Reforms to ensure broader mobilisation against the British. The mass mobilisation of the peasantry against feudalism and militant struggles waged against feudal rent, unjust evictions, usurious moneylenders and oppression of landlords forced the Indian National Congress to articulate the peasant related issues. The Karachi Session of Congress in 1931 adopted certain provisions, mainly on regulation of tenancy relations and the Faizpur Session in 1936 adopted special Agrarian Programmes which further called for substantial reduction in agricultural rent or revenue paid by the peasantry and in case of uneconomic holdings, exemption from rent and imposition of progressive income tax on agricultural incomes above a fixed minimum. The leadership was even at that point unwilling to even make any radical demands and we can find that an imminent peasant struggle after the Second World War once again saw the Congress make a demand for elimination of ‘intermediaries’ between states and tenants on the eve of the 1945-46 elections. However, it was made clear in the Manifesto itself that the rights of such intermediaries should “be acquired on payment of equitable compensation” (emphasis added).47

India witnessed an upsurge in peasant struggles after the Second World War, with the peasant movement spreading across the country. The struggles were largely against forcible evictions, forced labour, exorbitant rents, and usurious interest rates48 or even for a fair Public Distribution System, especially in the context of a famine like situation in many parts of the country49. The radicalisation of the peasantry saw the extension of the Bakasht movement of the late thirties to newer areas of Bihar, struggle against high rent in the Punjab, for ownership rights to

48 We shall come across struggles in Andhra where the account books of moneylenders were burnt.
49 The struggles in the Malabar region as we shall see had this as a major demand and instances of setting up of Fair Price Shops by the Karshaka Sangham are recorded. This demand during the Second World War, a time of famines could be seen as the initiator of the Public Distribution System in India.

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occupancy tenants and abolition of *Ala Malkiat* in PEPSU, against eviction from the *landka* land in Hyderabad; Kerala tenants fought for a proper share of the crop and against the tyranny of the *Jenmi*, Kayyoor, Karivellur and Punnapra Vayalar being the most heroic; in Uttar Pradesh struggle was launched against the eviction of *Bhataidars* from the *Sir* lands and the Warli tribe of Thane district in Maharashtra fought against forced labour and illegal exactions by the landlords successfully. The Tebhaga movement of Bengal, in 1946-47, focussed on the major demands of the sharecroppers—th[at they should be given two-third share of the crop, that the landlords should not make undue deductions from the produce before its sharing, and that the sharing be done in the barn of the sharecropper rather than in the courtyard of the landlord. Tripura witnessed struggle by the tribal peasants against alienation of land and encroachments on the rights of the *Jhumias* (shifting cultivators). The unparalleled struggle of the peasants of Telengana against the immediate issues of the oppression of the landlords and the deployment of armed thugs of the Nizam to intimidate tenants later broadened to include the demands of abolition of forced labour (*vetti*), end to illegal exactions and finally ending of the rule of the Nizam itself gained epic proportions and is a landmark in contemporary peasant history of the country.\footnote{Op Cit, Harkishan Singh Surjeet, 1992, pp-5-8.} It has to be however clear that the demands of the different struggles were different, ranging from higher wages, lower rents, security of tenure, higher share of produce like in the case of Tebhaga to a total abolition of feudalism and confiscation of feudal estates without compensation as in the case of the Telangana struggle.

The response of the Congress which was in power was two-fold. On the one hand the ruling party promised legislations to abolish intermediaries and enact tenancy and ceiling laws. On the other hand, a policy of ‘peaceful persuasion’ by launching Vinoba Bhave’s Bhoodan Movement, was launched to divert attention from land struggles and to prevent the radicalisation of the peasantry. The spectre of peasant driven movements and mass uprisings and peasant mobilisation
ensured that agrarian reforms brook large on the agendas of the ruling elite. The basic feature underlying the reform programme was the objective of only evolutionary adjustment in the social structure rather than to undertake radical reforms. The Congress Agrarian Reforms Committee was set up with Kumarappa as the Chairman in 1948. Although the Committee declared the objective of elimination of all intermediaries between the state and the tiller and adopted the slogan of ‘land to the tiller’ by declaring that there was “no place for intermediaries and land must belong to the tiller”51 the actual content of the agrarian reforms was the opposite. The pre-independence demand in the Congress Manifesto that called for acquiring rights of intermediaries on payment of ‘equitable compensation’ was the guiding factor in all future reforms.

Tomasson Januzzi has rightly noted that the abolition of the intermediary rights of the non-cultivating parasitic landholding intermediaries became a difficult proposition involving political costs as the Congress derived their strong support and hence, the ruling elite did not entertain it. According to him “the Committee, in effect, withdrew its absolute commitment (as earlier enunciated in the Report) to a definition of Land Reform based on “Land to the Tiller” and made plain, as had the Royal Commission on Agriculture in India in 1928, that did not equate a modern and efficient agriculture with peasant proprietorship on small units of production” by invoking the need for amalgamating small holdings into larger units of production in the name of cooperative joint farming to establish economies of scale in agricultural production.52

The transformation of the agrarian structure was sought to be facilitated through a phased implementation of certain Land Reform measures which can be broadly classified into three main aspects: abolition of intermediaries, tenancy reforms and ceiling laws. The Indian rural society under British colonial rule was replete with

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different varieties of intermediary interests between the state and the tiller of the soil as we have seen earlier. These intermediaries extracted exorbitant rents and appropriated a major share of it, paying only a portion as revenue to the British. The land was also concentrated in the hands of these intermediaries, with their tenure covering more than 40 per cent of the area of the country. The measures to abolish intermediaries have generally been declared by policy makers and mainstream economists as successful and having met the ‘desired result’. The ‘desired result’ did not however mean the annihilation of landlordism or the end of land concentration and monopoly of the feudal tenures altogether.

While the ruling party in Pakistan banned its own pre-independence manifesto seeking Land Reforms and made even its possession a punishable offence, thereby scuttling any chance of meaningful agrarian reforms, the Indian ruling party also achieved the same objective while throughout maintaining that it stood for abolition of intermediaries and ensuring ‘land to the tiller’. The entire effort was to make mere “incremental changes in colonial era laws governing relationships of landlords and tenants.” It has also been documented by various economists and political analysts that the Congress Government gave wide latitude to State Governments and procrastination in the actual implementation of the legislation for abolition of intermediaries, while simultaneously leading to a confusing multiplicity of Acts (An absurdly high number of seventy eight Acts were passed in the first three decades after independence, with Bombay State alone accounting for thirty one such Acts). The entire administrative structure itself impeded the effective implementation of even the limited goals that the policy makers set for themselves, being steeped as it was in the colonial legacy. The feudal landlords at the end of these Acts could still retain large areas by circumventing them, and treating these landholdings as Sir or Khudkast Lands for private cultivation, with no

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53 The first three Five Year Plans have declared it as a major achievement and so have the then Planning Minister Ashok Mehta and even Prof. Dandekar who made the assessment after the studies made by the Research Programme Committee of the Planning Commission.


rights whatsoever for the tenants on this portion.

Landlordism continued, and so did the monopoly of land in a few hands while all that was required of them to retain their dominant landholding position was to undertake a change in the position from the erstwhile absentee cultivator who indirectly cultivated the land using tenants to that of a direct cultivator using hired labour. There was a cascading effect of these reforms on the tenants who were unprotected and the zamindars in their drive for retaining their dominant position resorted to large-scale evictions and declaration of these lands to be under 'personal cultivation'. The Kumarappa Committee or the Congress Agrarian Reforms Committee had clearly defined 'personal cultivation' as only those lands where direct physical labour was applied along with actual participation in agricultural operations and also called for a ceiling on the quantity of land that could be 'resumed' for 'personal cultivation' to ensure that the tenants' holdings were not reduced below the 'economic' level.\textsuperscript{56}

The official Panel's recommendations were diluted to bring under the purview of 'personal cultivation' even land cultivated directly through casual hired labour and also through servants payable in cash or kind wages but not in share-of-crop other than land cultivated by one's own labour or that of family members.\textsuperscript{57} Thus, landlords managed to establish \textit{de jure} means to either evict or force 'voluntary' surrenders of land. In addition the Acts also ensured a liberal compensation was provided to the intermediaries for any portion of their feudal estates taken over by the government, brushing aside the demand of radical peasant groups like the Kisan Sabha for abolition of all intermediaries without compensation.\textsuperscript{58} The undue delays due to legislative procedures and legal wrangling also allowed the landlords

\textsuperscript{56} Op. Cit., Bisan Chandra, Mridula Mukherjee and Aditya Mukherjee (Eds.), 2000, pp-376-77.
\textsuperscript{57} Utsa Patnaik, "On the Evolution of the Class of Agricultural Labourers in India", in \textit{The Long Transition: Essays on Political Economy}, Tulika Publications, New Delhi, 1999, p-190. This definition can be found in the Andhra Tenancy Bill of 1960 and slight variations are found in other Acts.
\textsuperscript{58} The Central Kisan Council Meeting of the All India Kisan Sabha held at Calcutta in November 1946, was clear on the question of abolition of landlordism without compensation and passed a Resolution to this effect.
adequate opportunities to circumvent the laws and dilute their provisions.\textsuperscript{59}

There was also a direct relationship between the compensation paid to the intermediaries and the burden on the peasants as they were asked to bear the expenses to buy their right of ownership in some cases and even otherwise the compensation was to be financed by the net increase of revenue accruing to the state in the form of rents and land revenue directly paid to the Government by the erstwhile tenants. Uttar Pradesh went to the extent of setting up a Zamindari Abolition Fund aiming to accumulate Rupees 1.5 crores but collected Rupees 22.55 crores by 1956 thereby forcing the peasants to pay for eliminating the burden of maintaining the parasitic landlords that they had been carrying on their shoulders over the years.\textsuperscript{60} Certain analysts have suggested that the compensation paid was generally small and inconsequential.\textsuperscript{61}

**Table 4.1: Outlay of First Five Year Plan in Comparison to Compensation to Landlords:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SECTORS</th>
<th>PLAN OUTLAY (In Rupees. Crores)</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL OUTLAY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture and Community Development</td>
<td>360.43</td>
<td>17.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irrigation</td>
<td>167.97</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-Purpose Projects</td>
<td>265.90</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power</td>
<td>127.54</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport and Communication</td>
<td>497.10</td>
<td>24.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry</td>
<td>173.04</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Services</td>
<td>339.81</td>
<td>16.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rehabilitation</td>
<td>85.00</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>51.99</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2,068.78</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compensation to Landlords</td>
<td>670.00</td>
<td>32.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The fact however is that the RBI estimated a total compensation of Rs.670 crores which when compared with the First Five Year Plan investments (See Table) exposes the magnitude of the value of compensation; a heavy price paid while the

\textsuperscript{59} Cf. Tomasson Januzzi, 1998, pp-15-23 for a detailed enumeration of methods resorted to by the intermediaries to subvert the Reforms.

\textsuperscript{60} Op. Cit, Harkishan Singh Surjeet, 1992, pp-33-34.

\textsuperscript{61} Bipan Chandra is a classic example. Cf, Bipan Chandra, Mridula Mukherjee and Aditya Mukherjee (Eds.), 2000, p-376.
country was facing the ravages of famine, war and the partition which continued to be paid even during the Second Five Year Plan that was faced with a fiscal crisis by 1958.

The compensation to landlords was nearly twice the amount invested on social services, nearly equal to the outlay on transport, communication and industry; even more than the outlay for agriculture and community development, irrigation and power put together. It clearly points to the interest of the ruling classes in maintaining the dominance of the landlords and their monopoly over land. The main thrust of these laws was to convert the erstwhile rentier landlords into capitalists even as there were massive evictions of the tenants who were relegated to the position of landless agricultural workers which constituted an emergent trend of landlord capitalism. A stratum of rich peasants was also created. In effect rather than ending the monopoly of landholding intermediaries and their rights in land these laws only withdrew their longstanding right to collect land revenue as vested in them by the British.

The next phase of Reforms known as Tenancy Reforms was aimed at providing heritable rights and fixity of tenure, thereby putting an end to illegal ejections. The precursor to these Reforms also can be found in the demands by the Kisan Sabha and the Agrarian Programme adopted by the Indian National Congress at Faizpur in 1936 which called for 'fixity of tenure with heritable rights along with the right to build houses and plant trees' for all tenants. Tenancy laws being one of the earliest agrarian legislations in India were enacted by the British during their rule and brought into existence different types of tenants which can be categorised as occupancy tenants, non-occupancy tenants or tenants-at-will and sharecroppers.

The Tenancy legislations were also brought about by the Congress Governments to counter the growing peasant discontent and even in this case the pre-independence resolutions were diluted. Two rounds of Tenancy laws were enacted

63 "Agrarian Programme", Indian National Congress, Faizpur, 1936.
in the 1950s itself, with the first set being ‘interim’ in nature, attempted immediately after the adoption of the abolition of intermediaries acts. The second set of ‘comprehensive’ laws was to replace the interim measures with a set of tenancy laws and ceiling laws. The immediate necessity for these laws was to ensure uniform law applicable for the removal of differences in security of tenure, stop illegal evictions, to regulate the rents, fix guidelines for resumption, compensation, purchase and govern the agency of implementation.

However, even in this case there were states which continued with the interim laws or even the acts passed by the British (Bihar followed the Bihar Tenancy Act of 1885 and the Chota Nagpur Tenancy Act of 1908 in most parts although tenancy provisions were included in the Bihar Land Reforms Act of 1961). Karnataka is another extreme where the Bill published in the Gazette in 1958 was implemented only in 1968. The landlords got enough time to bring land under benami or fictitious names, ‘personal cultivation’, evict the tenants by resorting to forced surrenders. The Tenancy Reform Acts only covered a section of tenants and ordinary non-occupancy tenants or tenants-at-will were not able to get security of tenure. It was only occupancy tenants or permanent tenants who had held the land on lease continuously for anything between 6-12 years (6 years in some states and 12 years in Bihar and Assam). The unprotected tenants could be ejected at the end of their lease with the landlords. The landlords had in the case of occupancy tenants anticipated the repercussions and ensured that none of the tenants attained that status, as the concept of occupancy tenancy was brought into being several decades ago by the British. The clause seeking continuous cultivation for 6 to 12 years was also circumvented by denying tenants who had got the land recently from their predecessors who had been cultivating it for generations.\textsuperscript{65}

Tenancy legislation covered only a part of the tenants and there was a large number who did not come under its purview. The poorest of the lot who were non-occupancy tenants or tenants-at-will had no security of tenure, were evicted

\textsuperscript{65} Ibid, pp-48-55.
and converted to landless agricultural workers, while the better-off tenants who were known as occupancy tenants or permanent tenants got security of tenure, managed to purchase ownership and also increase the size of their holdings. Thus, by not distinguishing between the different classes among tenants, the Tenancy laws only promoted a sharp differentiation.66

The landlords' right to resumption for 'personal cultivation', and other loopholes ensured that the Acts which were to secure the tenants' interests were used to their detriment. False entries into land records and forcible ejections in the name of 'voluntary surrender' were the most commonly used measures, which were abetted by the prolonged process of legislation. It was after large scale evictions had taken place that provisions about minimum area to be left with the tenants, fixation of rent, ceiling on land holdings and stopping of illegal evictions were incorporated, under pressure of peasant struggles. The conferment of ownership traversed from selective ownership to permanent occupancy tenants or protected tenants only, to compulsory ownership for all tenants taking a tortuous route of prolonged legislative processes and legal wrangling for over a decade and a half. In the course the laws were rendered meaningless to a majority of the tenants who had been evicted by then and even lost the right for purchasing ownership.

The third phase of Reforms was the implementation of Ceiling Laws which were aimed to fix a maximum limit on individual landholding. The efficacy of the Agrarian Reforms could have been optimised had the three measures been a part of a uniform initiative as a simultaneous package rather than at delayed intervals. This aspect was clear to the leaders of the peasant movement from the very beginning and they had demanded that a ceiling be imposed upon the landlord's holdings and the surplus land acquired be distributed among the landless, along with abolition of intermediaries and Tenancy Reforms. The demand had been articulated in 1945 at the Central Kisan Council Meeting held in Bombay as: "... the maximum limit of land which a non-cultivating owner can either lease to the

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tenant or get it cultivated by hired labourers must be fixed.” Ceiling Laws were also dealt with in the same manner as the earlier Reforms and both the First Five Year Plan and the election Manifesto of the Congress in 1951 dismissed the demand for ceiling on existing holdings and assured any such limits only to future acquisition. This was despite the fact that the Economic Programme Committee with Nehru as the Chairman had immediately after independence recommended: “the maximum size of holdings should be fixed; surplus land over a maximum should be acquired and placed at the disposal of village cooperatives.”

The Second Five Year Plan did mention clearly the need for ceilings but defeated the purpose by giving exemptions to plantations, orchards, specialised farms engaged in cattle breeding, dairying, wool raising, sugarcane farms operated by sugar factories and 'efficiently managed farms' which consists of compact blocks on which heavy investment or permanent structural improvements have been made and whose break-up is likely to lead to fall in production. Individual holdings being set as the base in the Plan, rather than enforce ceiling on the family holding ensured transfer of land in the name of family members and even the fixing of the ceiling at three times the family holding for an average family not exceeding five members and to a maximum of six family holdings for larger families were the basis of evading these Laws.

The placing of the Kerala Agrarian Relations Bill in the Assembly by the first elected Communist Ministry in Kerala in 1957 which we shall come across later, ensured an urgency in the Congress Party also to enact some Laws, in anticipation of a growing opposition to its position by the rural masses. The exemptions were further widened to include many kinds of crops, suppression of actual size of land holding, transfers in name of family members, benami transfers, change in classification of land, litigations and the creation of religious and charitable trusts that also were exempted from ceilings, while also appropriating compensation

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68 Op Cit, Harkishan Singh Surjeet, 1992, p-75.
ensured that these Laws were evaded by the landlords. The Report on Ceiling on agricultural Holdings, prepared by the then Land Reforms Commissioner, P.S.Appu for the Ministry of Agriculture also pointed out transfers- both legal and clandestine and exemptions as the most important factors that rendered the Ceiling Laws ineffective.70 Most states however, passed these Laws also only in 1960s, giving enough time to the landlords to circumvent the provisions enshrined in them. The net result has been that the surplus land acquired has been infinitesimal when compared to the enormous army of the landless; an even smaller proportion has been distributed to the landless, since some of the land acquired was unfit for cultivation or required heavy capital investment to make it cultivable.71

It is often cited that since agriculture was a state subject under the Indian Constitution the central government was unable to use coercive Reforms into effect and further that the initial years of independence had pressing problems like rehabilitation of refugees, reorganisation of states, war with Pakistan, drought and food shortages, drafting of the Constitution etc which relegated Land Reforms to the background.72 It was rather the unwillingness of a leadership that represented the interests of the landlords that ensured that these Reforms would be in most cases stillborn. The heavy importation of foodgrains through sales, loans and grants by the USA and other Western countries and the adoption of ‘Green Revolution’ techniques also probably acted as a factor that staved off Land Reforms of a serious nature and kept agricultural production and relations in a state of stagnancy.73

‘Land to the tiller’ remained a slogan while in reality large scale evictions forced the

71 Op Cit, Utsa Patnaik, 1999, p-192.
73 The large scale import of food grains under the PL-480 and purchases ensured that the socio-economic significance of providing individual holdings to peasant proprietors or transforming the traditional land systems of India at the time of independence to provide the basis for a more productive and egalitarian agrarian society was undermined. The ‘Green Revolution’ techniques also favoured the landlords and rich peasants and advocated the need for larger units of production.
tillers out of their land and joining the ranks of landless agricultural workers. Agrarian relations however, underwent changes from absentee landlordism to landlord capitalism with an impetus to capitalist production for profit, which was enhanced by the creation of a new stratum of rich peasants from amidst the erstwhile occupancy tenants. The rural poor have had to fall back on usurer's capital due to accentuated condition of indebtedness under the impact of the semi-feudal forms of bonded labour and attached labour. The perpetuation of semi-feudal relations in vast parts of the country the continuation of the class-caste hierarchies; the landlords remaining to be from the uppermost echelons of caste structure, having a monopoly over land, credit, markets and decision-making while the agricultural workers and the landless belonged to the SC/ST or the other backward communities.

The experiences of areas with organised presence of peasantry we shall see are different from the national experience. The linkage between changes in the distribution of rights in land and the fostering of an economic environment conducive for rural economic development and improvement in people's welfare is sought to be analysed in the course of our study. It would look into the question of land redistribution in the wake of neo-liberal economic policies and if there has been a reversal of the gains of Land Reforms under its impact.

**New Agricultural Strategy and Green Revolution**

Stagnation crept into the agricultural sector by the end of 1950s leading to a shortage in supply of foodgrains and also the much needed raw materials for sustenance of the process of industrialisation. The absence of agricultural surplus created a situation wherein the limited foreign exchange reserves had to be utilised to import foodgrains to avoid a famine-like situation. The situation prepared the ground for the intervention of US experts from the Ford Foundation, who were invited by the government and submitted a Report in 1959. It was on the basis of their recommendations that the Intensive Agricultural District Programme (IADP) was adopted as a strategy to concentrate the development effort on certain select
irrigated districts and specific crops with the objective of enhancing food production.\footnote{Y.V.Krishna Rao, \textit{Agrarian Scenario: 1947-1997}, Navkamataka Publications, Bangalore, 1999, p-18 and G.S.Bhalla, “Agricultural Development in India Since Independence” in R.A.Choudhury, Shama Gamkhar, Aurobindo Ghose(Ed), \textit{The Indian Economy and its Performance Since Independence}, OUP, Delhi, 1990, p-195.} However, the efficacy of this Programme was soon in question as the increase in yield of crops was not significant, hampered as it was by the absence of proper institutional support and the absence of quality inputs.

The stagnation in domestic output of foodgrains in the beginning of the sixties forced the country to rely on food imports and the situation came to be further aggravated by successive monsoon failures in 1965-66 and 1966-67. The slowing down of agricultural growth also aggravated the inflationary spiral with food prices rising at the rate of 20 percent and the inflation rate touching 12 percent per annum. The rapid growth in population was accompanied by fluctuations in foodgrain output and crossing the food barrier became essential for taking forward the development process. The objective of self-sufficiency in foodgrains and raw materials was facing a catastrophic debacle even as the country had to depend on the food imports under humiliating terms. In the 1950s the imports averaged about 2.5 million tonnes, rose to 5.6 million tonnes a year in the 1960s and the successive drought years of 1965-66 and 1966-67 forced India to import about 10 million tonnes each year under the PL480 to meet its food demand. The import of foodgrains although mitigated the acute food problem, had a salutary effect on domestic food production because of deflationary impact on agricultural prices and also shattered the confidence of the newly independent country.\footnote{G.S.Bhalla, “Nehru and the Indian Peasantry”, \textit{NMML Monograph Number 3, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library}, New Delhi, 2003, p-25.} It is notable that certain economists sought the application of the Triage principle (sorting and allocating aid on the basis of likely benefit so that limited resources are not wasted on those who cannot be saved) with regard to India and called for the withdrawal of food aid since its draft on international wheat supply became too large and according to them it amounted to wasting of resources on an unsalvageable
position of imminent famine.\textsuperscript{76} It was under such circumstances that the drive towards capitalist production under the aegis of the landlords and the rich peasantry was sought to be accentuated by the adoption of the ‘New Agricultural Strategy’ or the Borlough Seed-Fertiliser Technology.\textsuperscript{77} The ‘New Agricultural Strategy’ laid emphasis on the use of modern technology and inputs like High Yielding Variety (HYV) of seeds of wheat and rice combined with nitrogenous fertilisers and mechanisation in areas with assured irrigation and came to be called as the ‘Green Revolution’. It has been termed as a political slogan which suggests a major breakthrough in agricultural production achieved peacefully without need for institutional reform and that technical change could be an alternative to radical political transformation.\textsuperscript{78}

The growth processes in the ‘Green Revolution’ areas ensured the acceleration of agricultural growth without having to bring about any real change in the traditional rural power structure, notwithstanding the limited efforts of Land Reforms. The dissemination of ‘Green Revolution’ techniques as a consolidated package of subsidised inputs in areas with assured irrigation with the extension of cheap credit initiated from 1960 onwards aimed at giving an impetus to self sufficiency in food grain production by resorting to capitalist production. It has been noted that the Government’s earlier efforts to induce farmers to use the new inputs were met with little success and whatever increase was achieved during the period between 1951 to 1961 was marked rather by the increased land that was brought under cultivation, with an addition of 22 percent in acreage under cultivation.\textsuperscript{79} This was essentially because the application of new inputs increased outlays even as severe credit constraints in the rural countryside acted as a further deterrent factor in the adoption of these inputs.

\textsuperscript{77} It was named so after Dr.Norman Borlough of the International Centre for Maize and Wheat Improvement (CIMMYT) known as the pioneer of the Green Revolution techniques in Mexico.
The Land Reforms which abolished statutory feudal landlordism giving ownership rights to occupancy tenants leading to the initiation of new production relations also enhanced agricultural production prior to the New Agricultural Strategy. The need for land-augmentation (raising yield per acre) was realised only when faced with the fact that in the next decade there was only a 4 percent increase in acreage of cultivable land, on the one hand and stagnation or decline in food production leading to dependence on import of foodgrains on the other. The intensification of capital application was seen as necessary for a broad transformation of the agricultural sector, to a reduction in food shortages and to equip agriculture to meet the requirements of industrialisation. The adoption of the New Agricultural Strategy witnessed the modernisation of agriculture and significant rise in foodgrain production was achieved. The foodgrain production which was at 50.8 million tonnes in 1950-51 and 89.0 million tonnes in 1964-65 reached a level of 108.42 million tonnes by 1970-71, thereby helping India to unilaterally terminate the PL480 agreement. Huge marketable surpluses in foodgrains helped the build up of buffer stocks and supply for urban consumption in the short run.

The adoption of the New Agricultural Strategy drastically altered the cropping pattern and the methods of production. There has been accelerated development of a market oriented capitalist agriculture. The changed production relations and the adoption of this strategy gave an impetus to commercial agriculture and commodity production and money-commodity relations have penetrated into even the remotest of villages. The employment of wage-labour and extraction of surplus-value came to be the principal manifestation of capitalist agriculture which came to be accompanied by general commoditisation and the reinvestment of surplus for extended production. The adoption of the New Agricultural Strategy and the technological innovations were facilitated by a system of state funded development of infrastructural facilities, extension facilities, subsidies, support

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prices and cheap credit. It relied on the private capitalist investments spurred by these measures to ensure transformation in agricultural production. However, the fact that these have been attempted even as the monopoly over land has remained virtually unchanged in an agrarian structure that has been ‘unreformed’ led to adverse consequences.\textsuperscript{82} Significantly, the adoption of this approach has seen the relegation of the Land Reform agenda to the background as the intensification of capital application was accompanied by the expansion of cultivable land under the command of the upper classes through leasing-in, purchase, forcible evictions, benami holdings and ‘personal cultivation’ as we have seen before.\textsuperscript{83}

The New Agricultural Strategy was based on the large surplus producing farmers who alone could initially venture into the application of the seed-fertiliser technology and has led to an extremel, skewed income distribution in the ‘Green Revolution’ areas, wherein the highest sections of the peasantry made gains while the others were in an unenviable condition.\textsuperscript{84} The Strategy induced owner cultivation by the rich peasants and landlords. The influx of technology into the Green Revolution areas led to the conversion of scarce land resources into a commodity with high opportunity cost and the capital intensive techniques were applied over such an ‘unreformed’ agrarian structure which has led to the ‘Prussian Junker’ model of development of capitalism. The rent-barrier was broken and the higher sections of the peasantry resorted to own cultivation using hired labour and augmented their production and marketable surpluses even as these grandiose schemes of agricultural advancement is constrained by the financial situation of a large majority of the peasantry. The inevitable concomitant of this Strategy as far as the peasantry was concerned is that it accelerated the differentiation of the peasantry and increased proletarianisation.

Indebtedness arising out of increased input costs, decreasing efficiency of inputs and other factors were accompanied by large-scale evictions of tenants who were

\textsuperscript{82} Op Cit, Utsa Patnaik, 1999, p-341.  
\textsuperscript{84} Op Cit, G.S.Bhalla, 1990, pp-201-05.
transformed into the burgeoning army of agricultural workers depending on wage labour. The Strategy hence, has been charged with having a pronounced elite bias and the technology employed is not neutral to scale. It has been pointed out, “technological change operates within the limits and constraints imposed by the class structure... The modern technology tends to accelerate the transition of agriculture in a capitalist direction along with the socio-economic differentiations associated with it.”

It has also been noted that the strategy favoured only certain crops like wheat and rice, while other foodgrains comprised a declining proportion of foodgrain production. The High Yielding Varieties required substantial complementary inputs in the form of fertilisers and plant nutrients and assured supplies of water at specific intervals; while the ‘miracle seeds’ ushered in by the Green Revolution had enormous productive capacity; they cannot do without chemical nutrition and chemical protection. The absence of assured supply of complementary inputs could render these seeds infructuous or lead to the yield being lower than from the use of the older varieties without applying these inputs. The variable costs of production of major inputs like fertilisers and seeds were also considerably higher than in the case of traditional crops and seed varieties and the new package increased the outlays necessary for irrigation. The percentage of purchased inputs in the total cost of agricultural production has increased under this capital-intensive strategy as the success of the strategy itself depended on the heightened use of costly HYV seeds, chemical fertilisers and pesticides, tube-wells, tractors, pump-sets machines and other agricultural inputs. Severe credit constraints in the rural areas ensured that the small holders could not benefit or make high gains that

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were promised by the new technology.88
The adoption of fertilisers, plant protection measures and new seeds were not feasible in arid regions and no proper technology was developed for augmenting the production of dry farming crops like pulses, oilseeds and coarse cereals other than jowar, maize and bajra. The high investment required for these inputs also make it risky under uncertain weather conditions.89 These seeds were often very low in immunity against diseases and while the chemical fertilisers being used in large quantities reduced the soil quality in the long run, the pesticides wiped out indiscriminately both the pests as well as the friendly insects. The residual effects of the chemicals applied and the over use of pesticides and fertilisers in the intensively cultivated areas lead to deteriorating quality of ground water and also have drastic effects on the soil chemistry. Soil degradation due to poor water management resulting in salinisation, alkalinisation, water-logging and reduced productivity is also matter for concern (the excessive standing water used in paddy cultivation in the Cauvery basin is a case in point)90.
The vaunted productivity achieved by the ‘miracle seeds’ also terminated the biodiverse nature of indigenous seed strains. The drive towards modern High Yielding Varieties of seeds also led to the discarding of seed strains indigenously developed over thousands of years by the peasants.91 The uniformity that genetically altered seeds lead to could emerge as a serious threat to agriculture as the genetic uniformity could be more conducive to harmful fungi and pests. The Southern Corn Leaf Blight in 1970 in the USA had wiped out 15 percent of that nation’s corn at a cost of $ 1 billion since the fungus thrived because of the corn’s

90 Interview with Dr.P.Krishnan, Principal Scientist and Head, National Bureau of Soil Survey and Land Use Planning, Regional Centre, Bangalore.
genetic uniformity. Whether the instances of crop wipe-out in areas of our study, for instance in ginger crop in Wayanad district in Kerala or chilly and cotton crop in Karimnagar district in Andhra Pradesh is due to such reasons would make an interesting topic of research for agricultural scientists.

The 'Green Revolution' was restricted to the well endowed districts in Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, and along with these states only Maharashtra, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh accounted for higher agricultural growth rate compared to the national average in the period after the implementation of this Strategy. In stark contrast to the rapid rise in food production per head of the total population that the north India experienced over the period after 1960, the other regions have witnessed either stagnation or decline. The encouragement to multiple cropping and the urge to maximise profits in order to meet the high costs incurred also led to changes in cropping pattern in favour specific crops and to the neglect of the dry land and rain-fed crops like pulses, coarse cereals and oilseeds which were largely cultivated in the semi-arid tropics of India which account for nearly three-fifths of the net cropped area. Inter-regional, inter-crop and inter-personal inequalities were thus accentuated. The drive towards commercialisation of agriculture and maximisation of agricultural profits has led to declining food production and increased production of commercially viable crops which along with the monetisation of food production, has reduced availability of food for the rural poor and led to falling real wages for labourers.

The country also witnessed during this period strong inflationary tendency which Kalecki had warned of as being inherent in Indian Plan implementation. There was a sharp rise in agricultural prices, the foodgrain prices rising at a faster rate than any other commodity. This benefited the landlords and rich peasants who sold a

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high proportion of output and capitalist tendency was encouraged in them, by raising the profitability of agricultural investment. This also simultaneously caused the poor peasants and agricultural workers who are net buyers were reeling under the impact of the inflationary process hit as they were by falling real wages. The strong inflationary tendency acted as an exogenous influence on the agrarian sector and led to Immiserisation of the agricultural workers.96 Under such conditions India embarked on the path of neo-liberal economic policies. The study undertaken by us intends to look into the new contradictions emerging in the rural countryside under the impact of the neo-liberal economic policies initiated in the 1990s and the WTO discipline imposed after signing the Uruguay Round Agreement of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade in April 1994. The trade liberalisation and investment regime under the earlier loan-conditional structural adjustment programmes from the late seventies as applied to the developing nations only got further strengthened in the decade of the nineties. India embarked on the policy of economic liberalisation in June 1991. India however, has not been a new entrant devoid of historical experience when it comes to the question of trade liberalised regimes and had experienced the operation of such a system under the British rule in the two centuries that immediately preceded the present one as we have noted. We shall look into the impact of Neo-liberal economic policies in the seventh chapter.

The next chapter would deal with the agrarian structure, social origins of peasant struggles, Land Reforms and agricultural transformation in the two states that we are studying and will be followed by a profile of the two states and Gram Panchayats that formed the area of our study, while placing it in the context of diverse experiences of development in the two states.