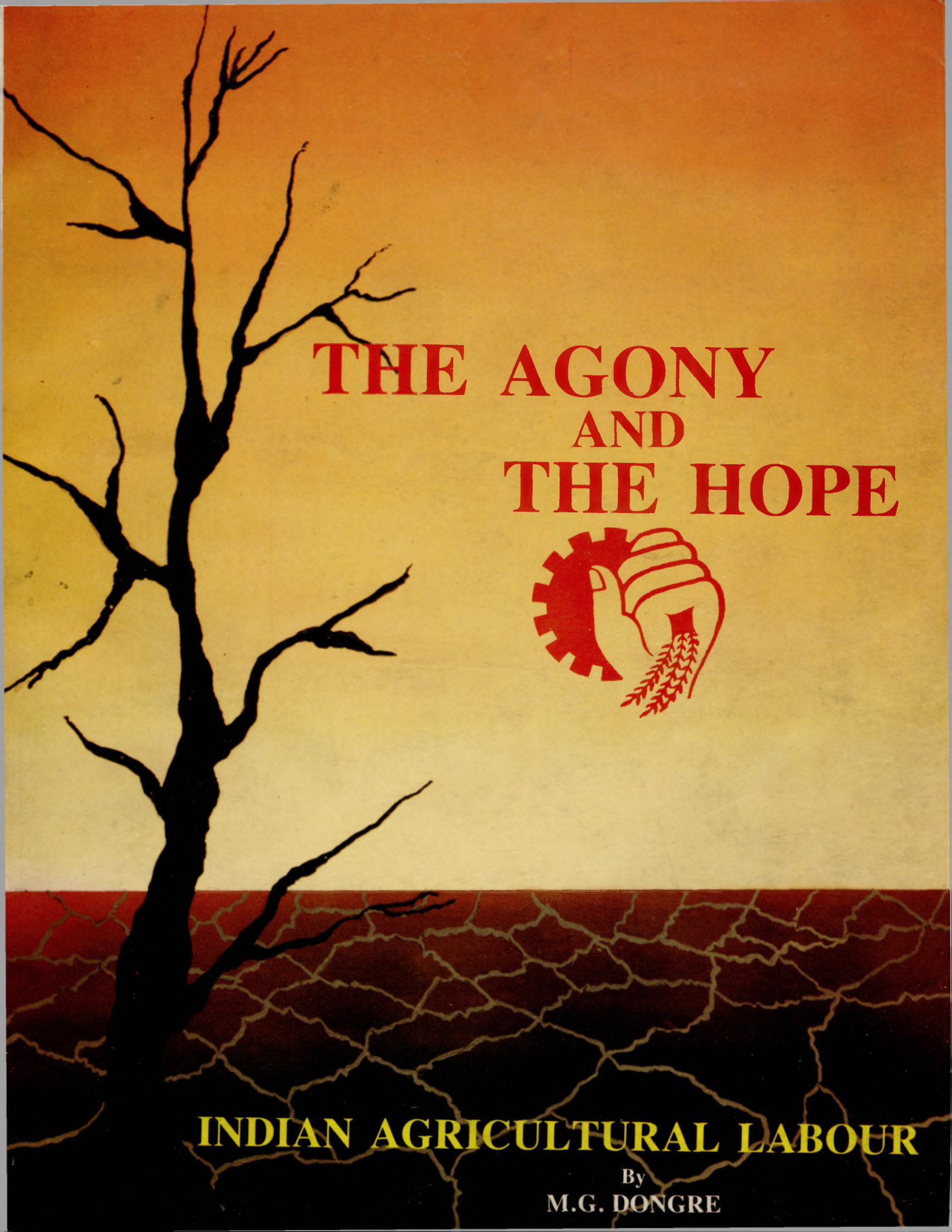




# THE AGONY AND THE HOPE



**INDIAN AGRICULTURAL LABOUR**

By  
**M.G. DONGRE**

### About the book

In this unique treatise the author has dealt extensively with the subject of the poverty of rural poor in India and especially of the agricultural labour. At the outset he has described, through the social studies of eminent writers, as to how this class of agricultural labour had emerged from the socio - economic system then prevalent in ancient India. On a very broad spectrum of historical background, right from Vedic period followed by Ramayana and Mahabharat, till the modern period ushering in Employment Guarantee Scheme, he has depicted the miserable socio - economic conditions of this down - trodden class of agricultural labour.

No doubt, efforts were made, as described by the author, by enlightened and religious rulers of Ramayana and Mahabharata period to give this class a respectable status in the social hierarchy and their due share in the prosperity of village and the nation. The author has even quoted in detail, from 'Shukra - Niti' and Kautilya's 'Arthashastra' to show how the philosopher - rulers of India attempted to lay down the definitions of minimum wage, medium wage and living wage. Kautilya's 'Arthashastra' has even stated in unequivocal terms as to how much fine should be imposed on the employer who does not pay in time or who refuses to pay to the agricultural labour his wages as per contract.

The author has indicated how the agricultural land became commodity for sale and mortgage during the British rule as a result of change in the system of collecting land revenue. The change in the system shifted the responsibility from the village to an individual. This ultimately resulted in the indebtedness of small agriculturalists and swelling of the number of landless labour.

(Contd on back flap)

# **The Agony and the Hope**

(Agricultural Labour in India)

**M. G. Dongre**

**Bharatiya Shramashodh Mandal, Pune**

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## FOREWORD

This book is important, as it examines the status and condition of agricultural labour in India in the context of rural development. It attempts to present the problems faced by this socially and politically crucial section of the population, which has remained continuously neglected in the last forty odd years since independence. Though lip-sympathy has been paid in abundance to the class of agricultural labour, in reality it has been increasingly exploited by the rich and middle-level landholders. The policy of the Government of India and of the States is on paper sympathetic to the agricultural labour but in practice, little has been done to improve their lot. The author of this book seeks to invite attention to their plight by presenting a historical review of the agricultural labour as a class in the first part of the book. The second part reviews the measures taken by Governments for land reforms and rural development, and the policies and programmes for rural development. The third part of the book deals with the agitations and struggles launched by the agricultural labour to promote the interests of rural poor.

## Dedicated to

*The poorest of the poor in India*

The first chapter presents some significant features of the agricultural labour class. In Punjab and Haryana, the two states on the forefront of the Green Revolution as regards production of wheat is concerned, the proportion of agricultural labour to total agricultural families rose from 1961 to 1981 - from 12 per cent to 29.5 per cent in Punjab and from 7.7 per cent to 20 per cent in Haryana. However, these two states accounted for less than 2 per cent each of the total agricultural labour population in the country. On the other hand, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu together accounted for over 20 per cent of the total agricultural labour in the year 1981. These figures tell us something of the regional distribution of the presence of agricultural labour. Yet in Punjab and Haryana a significant proportion of labour is engaged from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Orissa, etc. Another important characteristic of the agricultural labour population is that scheduled caste and scheduled tribes constitute a bulk of them. As regards their earning (working) pattern, it was found that the all-India average number of wage-paid days for male workers was 217 in 1964-65 but declined to 193 in 1974-75; the number of days for adult females dropped correspondingly, from 149 to 135. Thus, on the average the workers get wage-paid employment for hardly half of the year and that too has been declining. Clearly then almost 70-80 per cent of the agricultural labour is below the poverty-line.

The first chapter also provides other facts about their working conditions like real and current wages in different states, their indebtedness, the system of bonded labour and its extent. The second chapter deals with the effects of land reforms, describes how land reforms failed to deliver the goods, the reasons for their failure, etc. The author observes that tenancy reforms have made it difficult for small farmers to lease in and expand or else to make the holding economically viable. The effects of the Green Revolution are said to be mixed. According to some studies, the condition of

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agricultural labour has generally not further worsened by the Green Revolution. According to some other studies, though the levels of money wages in Punjab and Haryana continued to be the highest, trends in real wages do not show a rise in real wages.

The poor implementation of land reforms is attributed to lack of political will; the poor were further victimized giving rise to violence and the Naxalite movement. The distribution of surplus land, which is meagre, is on paper only. Beneficiaries did not get actual possession. The Bhoodan movement has also received critical attention.

The third chapter takes stock of the programmes for rural development like the community development, national extension programme, integrated rural development, Panchayat Raj and various other projects for poverty eradication like National Rural Employment Programme, Employment Guarantee Scheme in Maharashtra. In regard to each of these major schemes, their objectives, operation, benefits have been critically appraised.

The fourth chapter traces the causes of different peasant movements such as of the Warlis in Thane and 'Adivasis' of Shahada in Dhule district (of Maharashtra), the Naxalite struggle etc. and emphasises that the peasant and agricultural labour's movements emerged due to the injustice meted out to them and continued neglect of their interests by the authorities.

This book thus deals with a vital problem of Indian rural society namely the development of rural poor. It is very informative and compiles a lot of data from various sources viz. Government publications and studies carried out by scholars and experts in the agricultural economies area. However, there are several lacunae in the presentation. It does not give an impression of an integrated theme being analyzed. The author seems to be extremely concerned about the conditions of the marginal, submarginal cultivators and the landless labour. However it lacks the rigour of economic analysis and so has become loose in its presentation of different issues covered in the different chapters.

The author is a lawyer by qualifications, though social worker and activist by choice. As he is not a trained economist or sociologist, some of the technical shortcomings of the book need to be overlooked.

The author is perceptive but reveals lack of perspective, inasmuch as, he has dwelt on the prehistorical and ancient references to agriculturists and labour in works like Ramayana and Mahabharat or Shukraniti. About 25 pages have been devoted to these. In a serious study of present conditions of peasants and the aspects of rural development, these old references, however interesting, have just no place and detract from the value of the book as they are not very relevant. Similarly, the references and notes to chapters are very many but not systematically presented and organized. These deficiencies could have been avoided, if the manuscript had been properly and professionally edited. Yet the book is a welcome addition to the literature as it seriously documents the ailments of the rural poor.

July 1, 1993

**V. S. Patwardhan**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This book has grown out my experience and study while working as General Secretary, of Akhil Bharatiya Krishi Mazdoor Sangh, affiliated to Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh.

I owe a special debt to Pro. D. N. Dhanagare of Pune University. The idea of undertaking a study of the origin, problems, agitations and struggles of Agricultural Labourers was first conceived in the course of discussion with him in respect of the work of our Akhil Bharatiya Krishi Mazdoor Sangh (A.B.K.M.S.) He took keen interest in this project and carefully scrutinised the draft of my study and made many valuable suggestions. Of course the errors which remain are entirely mine.

The author will be amply rewarded if this book induces the activists of the A.B.K.M.S. and casual reader to take up the study of various dimensions and aspects of the socio - economic conditions of Indian agriculture labour. The Book is an humble effort to acquaint the readers with the basic aspect of the philosophy of A.B.K.M.S. and the origin, growth of Indian Agricultural Labour and the various problems they have to face.

I would like to record my gratitude to Shri. Mukundrao Gore, Secretary, Akhil Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh, and Mr. Padmakar Vaze of Pune. While preparing this study I have been benefitted from discussion and consultation with them. But for their co - operation and help, this book would not have seen the light of the day.

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**M. G. Dongre**

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Prof. V. S. Patwardhan

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## Chapter I

### ORIGIN & GROWTH OF AGRICULTURAL LABOUR IN INDIA, SINCE VEDIC PERIOD TO MODERN TIMES

#### (A) Emergence of a class of Agricultural Labour



Over the past two decades or so there has been considerable revival of research interest in the field of Agrarian relations and changing Indian rural scenario. This trend is more striking in so far as studies on agrarian movements, peasant movements by K.C. Alexander, Kathleen Gough, D.N. Dhar, K. Sen, Barry Foster and number of others bear testimony to this growing interest in social sciences research in India. Studies on women, their liberation movement, problems of Dalits and tribals, in short the whole range of down trodden and backward class sections of the society and their emerging concerns, have found prominently in their research concerns. The series on Studies in Agrarian Movements by Ranajit Guha, and the two volumed anthologies of the Agrarian struggles in pre and post-Independent India edited by A.R. Desai have embodied these concerns.

On the other side of the 'movement studies', are studies of 'Structure', 'agrarian structures', more particularly that highlights the conditions and structural settings within which such movements have gathered momentum. Scholarly works of C. Beitzheim, Daniel Thorner, Andre Beteille, Usha Patnaik, Ashok Rudra, Parash Chatterpachay, Arvind N. Das, P.C. Joshi, and more recently those of G.S. Bhatia and Chakrabarti are noteworthy. They have competently portrayed the kind of social transformation that rural India has gone through since the Independence and the process of agrarian change generated during the pace of India's planned development. Despite this impressive record of studies on agrarian social structure and social movements in rural India, no systematic account of the origin and growth of agricultural labourers as a class is available. Either this class is taken for granted and treated as inseparable from the lower strata of peasantry, assuming that no separate analytical treatment is called for, or is not considered important enough to understand the structure and dynamics of rural society in India.

However, during the last century the number of agricultural labourers in India is ever increasing. It has great momentum to growing research interest amongst the Indian Social Scientists and Economists. S'Sri Surendra J. Patel,(1) H.D. Mahuya,(2) Dharmakumar (3) and others have published lot of papers and recently the renowned sociologist Smt. Usha Patnaik has given us a valuable insight into the problems of this sector. The sociologists and others who have made considerable contribution in tracing the origin of this sector, can be grouped under two important schools.

One school of thought asserts that the 'British Rule' and its colonial economic policy making through in the economic and agricultural pattern of the country, has in its wake given rise to this sector i.e. 'Agricultural Labour'. S'Sri Surendra Patel, H.D.

# The Agony and the Hope



## *Chapter 1*

### **ORIGIN & GROWTH OF AGRICULTURAL LABOUR IN INDIA, SINCE VEDIC PERIOD TO MODERN TIMES**

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One school of thought asserts that the 'British Rule' and its colonial economic policy making inroads in the economic and agricultural pattern of this country, has in its wake given rise to this sector i.e. 'Agricultural Labour'. S/Shri Surendra Patel, H.D.

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Malviya, Kamalkumar Ghosh (4) are the chief advocates of this theory.

The other school is of the opinion that the roots of this sector can be found in the traditional caste system prevalent in the country and its effects on the economic relationships, financial transactions, trades, vocations and industry of the rural community. S/Shri Dharmakumar (3), Radha Kumud Mukherji (5), V.R. Joshi (6) can be mentioned as some of the prominent sociologists, who subscribe to this theory.

The first school of thought maintains that, in ancient and mediaeval times, 'Agriculturist class' comprised of self-sufficient and self-cultivating peasants, was the backbone of rural social structure. These peasants who collectively owned the means of production used to toil on their own fields. Other trades and vocations carried out by carpenters, iron-smiths etc. were complementary to agricultural activities. For these services, these tradesmen and vocationalists used to receive foodgrains, other commodities and agricultural produce from the farmers. In this type of social economy, Community as a whole could maintain a certain standard of living. It was, therefore, not necessary for some members of society to seek 'avenues of work elsewhere'. The total village land was owned by the rural community. All the population in need of work could find opportunities of work in the village itself. Especially, in Agricultural field at least, villages were self-sufficient and this state of affairs used to be maintained by barter system covering inter-personal transactions. There had not been any possibility of the existence of a class of people, exclusively working as labour on the land owned by others.

This school of thought further states, that, with the advent of British Raj, the alien rulers introduced a new system of land revenue and increased the rate of such revenue/cess.

Farmers were made individually responsible for payment of such revenue, in the greater part of the country. As a result of this new Land revenue recovery system, the traditional collective life system in rural area came to an end.

Under the British Rule, due to change in prevalent system of collection of land revenue, brought about by enactment of new laws, it became possible for the land-owners to sell their lands.

Land was never a mortgageable commodity in India before the advent of the British. Laws enacted from 1835 onwards granted unrestricted rights of land transfer as well as its mortgage and recovery through British courts of laws.

According to some researchers Mr. George Wingate, chief architect of survey settlement, undertaken in India by the British Raj had perceived the land transfers, mortgage as a means to get rid of uneconomic cultivators and substituting them by pensioners, traders and owners with capital. (6A)

Coupled with this fact, general depression felt by agricultural industry, pressure on existing land on account of increasing population, small farmers were perforce of circumstances, obliged to sell their holdings of land to big landlords, Jahagirdars etc. Necessity to mobilise sources for payment of land revenue or for repayment of debt received from village moneylenders, compelled a large section of farmers to sell the land owned by them. After selling the land, such farmers became agricultural labourers.

In contrast to this theory, the other school of thought feels that the very idea of self-sufficient village comprising of farmers tilling their own land, helped by the other tradesmen and vocationalists is an absurd over-simplification of facts. Even prior to British Rule and before 19th Century, Zamindari System was well established in the country. The omnipotent presence of big zamindars was felt even then. Prof. Dharmakumar has pointed out that in the South, there were big landlords who owned large pieces of land and it was quite impossible for them, to cultivate the land only with the help of family members. They might not have been owners of land of hundreds of acres but still it was possible for them to provide work for 2-3 families in their fields. It has also been further pointed out that landowners were high class Brahmins. In Tanjore (Tamilnadu) ownership of land was with 'Agrahar Sllith' Brahmins while in South Kerala Namboodri Brahmins owned the land. As laid down by Ancient customs, this class of landowners, was prohibited from working physically in the fields. Therefore these landlords gave land to their tenants or employed daily wage labour, for cultivation. At times, employment of bonded labour was also resorted to.

This school of thought further maintains that in earlier times, castes and professions were closely connected and under such social structure landowners belonged to higher class, tenants to middle class and agricultural labour to the lowest class. Therefore, the existing class of agricultural labour is not necessarily descendants of ancient landowners or tradesmen; for even then there existed a separate sector of such 'Agricultural Labour.'

To sum up it can be said that according to former school of thought, evolution of this class of agricultural labour is a gift of the British Rule while the latter school is of the opinion that this class has been in existence since ancient times and has its roots in the then prevalent caste system.

There is the 3rd school of thought, comprising of sociologists like Utsa Patnaik, which holds a different view on this subject. According to their reasoning, there existed a class of people, who were landless and poor and formed an indispensable strata of social and economic order. This class used to work as 'Bonded Labour' for landlords, from generation to generation (7). These people were forbidden to own any land and required to carry out menial physical duties in addition to working in the fields. In the caste system in vogue, these people were treated as socially outcaste untouchables. Shri Sharad Patil (8) and some others hold an emphatic view that in ancient times in India, slavery was having its foothold and the slaves had to work on the land owned by their masters. For this service no remuneration was paid to the slaves but only meagre food and clothing used to be provided for their survival. They were leading life of misery and

#### 4 : *The Agony and the Hope*

slavery, like beasts. Therefore, no separate class of agricultural labour entitled to wages, was in existence in ancient times.

This view, propounded by Shri Sharad Patil appears to gain strength when we find that, even today, such system is in existence in different parts of the country e.g. 'Hali Labour in Gujarat', 'Bandhua-Labour in Rajasthan-Haryana', 'Bonded Labour in Maharashtra', 'Serfdom in Cherumer - Pulya Castes', 'Mala and Madiga in Andhra Pradesh', 'Perayyar in Tanjavur'.

All these theories give rise to a number of questions and unless these are properly answered, it is not possible to arrive at any logical conclusion as to when 'Agricultural Labour' emerged as a distinct class. Some of the questions are as follows - When and by whom 'Agriculture' was resorted to in India? Whether it is true that 'Aryans' came to India from other continents and took to 'Agriculture', on settling here after initial nomadic life? When those people established colonies or villages for permanent settlement? What was the socio-economic system in villages at that time? Answers to these and other relevant questions are to be sought to determine the period of origin of 'Agricultural Labour Class'.

#### 1. VILLAGE STRUCTURAL PATTERN

Since long, villages have been primarily settled agricultural communities and hence the evolution of village social organisation is intricately interconnected with the development of agrarian production systems and agrarian relations. It therefore, becomes necessary to peep into history to ascertain as to how 'village' came into existence. This will be quite helpful to understand as to what castes or classes or other social categories that were engaged in physical activities in the fields at that time and whether there were different from the proprietors from traditional cultivating castes.

In India conception of village has special significance, purpose and context. Country's social, economic and political future is dependent directly on the conditions and progress of village. **An Indian village is the mirror of past and present India.** Though, there are about 6 lakhs villages in India it is surprising that planners have not been able for four decades after independence, to have a clear definition of a village.

What is the definition of village? Whether it is only dependent on the number of households and people? Concept of village varies from nation to nation. As per western ideology, concept of village is comparatively recent one, while as per oriental thinking, this concept is much older and basic. Western thinking visualizes a village, as a somewhat larger cluster than 'Hamlet' but smaller than that of a town (9). Compared to western countries, India has been the seat of advanced culture and progress, since ancient times and its heritage in this behalf is quite rich. It therefore naturally follows that a reference to a village finds a place in India's ancient literature. According to Bede Powell, 'Aryans' picked up the idea of a village from 'Dravidians'. At least Aryans found well developed villages as permanent settlement in Dravidian groups (10). But A.S. Altekar has conclusively proved that this inference is quite erroneous.

Shri. Altekar has pointed out that, a number of references to villages have been made in 'Vedas' e.g. (11)

असि ग्रामेषु अविता पुरोहितः

Asi grāmeṣhu avitā purohitah

This reference in Vedas, describes 'Fire' as clergy of a village. Further more in the prayer for prosperity of a village, reference has been made to all the village populace and animals.

तथा शूद्रजनप्रायाः सुसमृद्धकृवीवलाः ।

क्षेत्रोपभोगभूमध्ये वसतिग्रामसंज्ञिता ॥

Tatha sudrajanaprayaḥ susamṛuddhakṛṣhivalaḥ

Kṣetropabhogabhūmadhye Vasatigramsaṁjñitā

In ancient Sanskrit literature, it has been quoted that places where suitable agricultural land is available for permanent settlement, and where farmers and labourers are staying, such settlements are termed as villages (13). In Mahabharata greater details about villages have been given (12). A clear and graphic definition of village has been given by Kauṭilya in his 'Arthashastra', it reads as follows : (14.12)

"Villages consisting each of not less than a hundred families of agricultural people of Shūdra Caste with boundaries extending as far as a 'Krośa, (2250 yards)" (14).

Arya Chanakya has further referred to villages as settlements of soldiers, labourers and dairymen. He has also described a village as Sudrakarsaka Prayam, meaning habitats where primarily shudras (शूद्राज) and agriculturists reside (11).

In 'Gupta Reign', village was the lowest unit in the Administration structure. Historians hold that in South India Kurram (cluster of villages) and the villages were the lowest administrative units (15). This discussion makes it quite clear that right from the Vedic times to modern times, village is in existence and it has played a very prominent role in the formulation of economic and social structure.

Generally, village has been the habitat of people mainly engaged in agriculture and village has been in existence as borne out by references in vedic literature. Conclusion can be reached that in India, agriculture has been the vocation of people since vedic period and it is quite true.

Since thousands of years B.C. ' Pastoral Age ' came to an end in India and agriculture became the main industry or vocation. In 'Rigveda' invocations to Rain Gods and Rivers for enrichment of agricultural land and for better produce are found (16).

अक्षैर्मा दीधः कृषिमित् कृषस्व विते श्मस्व बहु मन्यमानः ।

लभ गावः कितव लभ जाया तन्मे विचष्टे सवितायमर्थः ॥ Reg 10.34.13)

Akṣairma dīdha Kṛsimit kṛsasva vitte Shamasvabahu manyamānaḥ/ Labha gavaḥ kitava Labha jaya tanme vicasti savitāyamarthah (Reg. 10. 34. 13)

Agriculture was given prime importance and priority, as an Industry. In 10th Mandala(10-34 13) of Rigveda, we come across an episode where a gambler financially shattered on account of losses in gambling is advised to give up gambling and take to agriculture for better future.

References made to agriculture as an industry/vocation are found even in 'Atharvaveda (17), Taittirīya Samhitā (18), Shatapath Brahman (19) etc.

Thus, it is clearly established that since ancient times, village alone with its populace undertaking agricultural activities as primary vocation, has been in existence in India. Naturally, economic and social systems came to be developed taking agriculture as epicentre of activities.

## 2. VILLAGE SOCIAL STRUCTURE

For meeting the family needs of peasants and also to complement the agricultural profession, non- agricultural industries/ professions also sprang up. Since ancient times services of carpenters, iron-smiths, cobblers etc. are required for manufacture and/or repairs of agricultural equipment and tools. To meet the daily necessities of peasants, services of barbers, washermen, potters etc. are also necessary. Professionals like clergymen, priests are other constituents for worship of God and meeting other religious obligations. In villages, where these professionals are not available, great hardship is felt in carrying out agricultural activities or attending to daily personal/family chores. These tradesmen viz. Chaugula, Mahar, Carpenter, Iron-smith, Cobbler, Potter, Barber, Goldsmith, Priest, Washermen, Guravs (temple caretaker) and Fisherman were termed as "Balutedars or Kāru". In addition there were 18 other professionals and tradesmen who were known as 'Nāru or Alutedar'. They are Teli, Tamboli, Sali, Sangar, Shimpi, mali, gondhali, gairya, bhat, thakur, gosavi, jangam, moulana, vajantri, ghadasi, kalavanta, bhoi etc (20).

In village, whether large or small, tradition was established for taking care of these other professionals with a view to avoid inconvenience and difficulties in agricultural and personal needs of the farmers. As per this tradition, once or twice a year depending on harvest of foodgrains, villagers used to give foodgrain to these classes of workers and in return, these professionals used to meet the needs of villagers in a dedicated manner. Foodgrain, thus given was known as 'Balute.' All farmers gave foodgrains to these 'Balutedars'. These Balutedar classes used to meet requirements of each other without asking for any compensation.

Important 'Balutedars' for agriculture were "Carpenter, Iron-smith, Cobbler and Mang", while for meeting personal and family needs of farmers, prominent Balutedars were, "Barber, Washerman, Tailor, Potter and Fisherman". For religious functions, prominent Balutedars were, 'Gurav, Joshi etc.' Mahar and Ramoshi were primarily associated with Government Duties (21). These 'Balutedars' used to help the Government officials in village viz. "Patil, Kulkarni, Patwari - Pande," in their day-to-day duties. This traditional system of 'Balute' was legally recognised in 1934-35. This system was prevalent in Maharashtra till the 1<sup>st</sup> half of this century. In other parts of India also, the system was in existence to certain extent with minor variations e.g. in northern India there was similar Yajamani System. How and when this system did come into existence?

In vedic times, every village was self-sufficient and self-administered. However, this

situation did not last long. In later vedic-times e.g. in 'Atharvaveda times', large Empires with their political constituents and systems came into existence for administration of the country. In this wake, village lost its self-administration system. Small villages were merged as units in these empires and kingdoms. However, 'Balute System' continued to exist.

System was in vogue to provide portion of midday meal to village worker (helping in domestic needs) such as 'Bhangis (wet sweepers), Bhistis (watermen) etc. The services these classes rendered to various families were paid for in kind by way of cooked food, which they had to collect daily from such houses. Village Brahmin (Priest) also was entitled to his share, due to his special status. He enjoys priority for meals (Agra bhojanika) (अग्रभोजनिक) as mentioned by 'Karshika'. It may be noted here that this designated provision of food, forms part of the wages, on which labour is employed. According to 'Panini', this designated food may be of different kinds e.g. cooked vegetables श्राण (śrāṇa) cooked rice with meat (Māṃsa va Odana) (मांस व ओदन) or full meals (25).

Carpenters, Iron-smith, Barber, Potter, Fishermen, Cobbler are the servants of the society and their maintenance (Yogakshema) is the responsibility of the whole society according to 'Chanakya' (11). Since vedic times till British Rule, many political revolutions, changes took place. However, this system in village survived. Many researchers/observers have categorically stated that this system has been firmly rooted as primary constituent of administrative machinery and major constituent of various religious systems and that of society (20).

Indian village administration with its major industry as agriculture along with various complementary/auxiliary trades, vocation and industries constituting social and economic system has been in existence since ancient times,

People in India had visualised in Vedic times the necessity of culture which provides for division of labour to satisfy the needs, and conveniences felt by the society. In those times, the people used to carry on various trades/industries as it was recognised that it is worthwhile for everyone to follow different trade/profession/industry. In Rgveda following citation is found. It states that the 'Dawn' has awakened the people to enable them to follow their own vocations and to support themselves. Some people should embark on capturing power, some should seek fame, some should go after wealth and some should seek employment (22). This division of labour was necessary for growing needs of production of wealth and for increasing use of new production technology for sustenance of society. This division of labour keeps pace with the development of society.

This system was based on the natural needs of the society. Families carrying on such interdependent specific trades/vocation/profession from generation to generation came in existence for smooth functioning of society. Initially, these families were from one and the same community but with the progress of time, feeling of unity waned away and its place was taken by individualism and division. Different communities came into being for various industries and trades and based on the nature of each industry/trade

one came to be considered as honourable and superior to other. The feeling of division was thus nurtured and different castes carrying on particular industry trade came into existence. Over Centuries, this process gave rise to new castes and even now, this caste system is in existence, with slight variation in degrees. In Urban areas this caste system is somewhat tempered due to spread of education, enactment of laws for removing untouchability, adult franchise, reservation of jobs for various scheduled castes and tribes etc. However, no appreciable change is noticed in the social structure in rural areas, which has caste system as its base. As stated above, caste came to be known by the particular trade/industry followed by one section of the society. Therefore, some researchers opine that castes are creation of trades/industry undertaken by sections of populace (20). Untouchables, who stand on the lowest ladder of caste hierarchy were mainly engaged as Agricultural Labour.

From the above discussions it will be seen that village institutions and Agriculture are in existence in India from ancient times and numerous references to this effect are found in Vedic literature. How they used to till the land? Whether they themselves were engaged in Agricultural activities or whether they cultivated the land with the help of labour employed on wages or as serfs? Whether Aryans are of Indian origin or whether they came from outside?

Prof. Benale and other Europeans, as well as Lokamanya Tilak and other Indian Scholars hold the view that 'Aryans' came to India from outside. In their opinion their original habitat was to the East of Caspian Sea, to the north of Black Sea or region of Arctic ocean Aryans invaded India and turned the originals here into slaves. This is the inference drawn by many scholars. However, this inference is totally unjustified as has been proved by a number of researchers. Shri P.T. Shrinivas Iyengar has pointed out that there is no evidence in Vedic literature to establish that Aryans came from outside India. The words 'Arya, Das and Dassu' used in 'Mantras' do not indicate races but religious sectors (23).

Prof. D.S. Trivedi points out that in Vedic literatures the rivers have been affectionately referred to as 'My Ganges, My Jamuna, My Saraswati'. This affinity cannot be expected in outsiders (24). Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar has proved with conclusive evidence that words 'Das and Dassu' appearing in vedic literature do not denote race. He has cited following Richas from Rigveda.

Rigveda 10-49-3 - (Indra says) "I have taken away from Dassus their racial status.

Rigveda 1-151-8 "Oh! Indra, find out who are Aryans and who are Dassus and keep them apart". Thus, the difference was not based on race. Dr. Ambedkar has concluded the subject on following note.

"No evidence is found in Vedas of the existence of Aryan race. Inference that Aryans invaded India and gained victory over original inhabitants i.e. Das and Dassu is not supported by any evidence in vedas. Similarly, no proof is available to sustain the view that racial difference existed between Aryans, Das and Dassu". (22)

In an interview given to Shri D.B. Thengdi, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar has stated that in the year 1853 A.D. the renowned western scholar Dr. Max Muller had propounded the

theory, that Aryan was a race and the original home of the Aryans was in Middle Asia. Dr. Ambedkar further told that, Mr. Max Muller himself admitted later on that this theory was absolutely wrong. He quoted Max Muller as follows -

‘There is no Aryan race in Blood. Aryan is scientific language. It is utterly inapplicable to race. (22A)’.

Dr. Sampurnananda in his research on this subject has produced evidence of various verses in the Rig-Veda and conclusively proved that the word Arya does not denote race and that the original home of the Aryas was “Sapta Sindhu” i.e. Bharat itself. (22B).

Therefore, it can be concluded, that, the theory of Aryan invasion of India and their victory over the original habitats, turning them into serfs or slaves is baseless. However, word ‘Das’ finds a place in Vedic literature as well as subsequent ‘Sanskrit’ and ‘Pali’ literature.

In what context the said word was used? ‘Das’ is derived from the root ‘Dasa’. It means to undertake or carry out agricultural activities, as per “Nirukta”. Though people engaged in work in fields were called ‘Das’, not all the people so engaged were recognised as such. Then the problem about the status of ‘Das’ involved in agricultural activities, in the then prevalent social structure, arises. Whether connotation of serfdom or slavery was implied by the term ‘Das’?

Ram Sharan Sharma states that in ‘Rigveda’, ‘Das’ has not been used to imply ‘slavery’. Instead ‘Das’ means a person. He further states that no reference is found in Rigveda, to ‘Das’ working in agricultural fields. (26)

In the 4th century B.C., the system of ‘Das’ was not prominently in vogue. This sector was receiving such a fair treatment in India that a foreign tourist like Megasthenes who was well acquainted with slavery system in Greece opined that identical ‘Das’ system was not prevalent in India. The renowned oriental research scholar Shri P.V. Kane also holds the same view. (27) Megasthenes during the course of his objective studies, did not find slavery system in India, similar to the one existing in Greece.

However, researchers like Shri Sharad Patil in present times are still toiling to prove the existence of slavery system in India.

In India, production process was not based on the toils of Dasas (slaves), as was the system in Greek and Roman empires. In those empires, society had polarized itself in two distinct classes viz. (1) Independent Citizens : owners of properties and wealth and (2) slaves. No such polarization was existing in India according to Uma Chakraborty (28).

It is seen that in Buddhist period also, employees and Dasas enjoyed equal social status. A reference is found in Buddhist literature that “son of Gahapati Mendaka is disbursing money to Dasas and Karmakars.”(29) It is therefore, evident that in ancient times ‘Das’ was not treated as a slave.

Some scholars feel, that, when Emperor Ashoka invaded and conquered ‘Kalinga’ 1,50,000 persons were abducted and employed as ‘Das,’ in agricultural fields. However, D.D. Kosambi holds a contrary view. He says, “8 years after the coronation

of benevolent, kind, loved by Gods, he conquered 'Kalinga' and captured 1,50,000 persons from that country."

From the citations and policies laid down in 'Artha Shastra' which was written prior to the period of King Ashok it can be inferred that abduction of these people was not as slaves but was for the purpose of employing them as labourers in the land owned by the state. (30).

The Great Critic 'Patanjali,' commenting on Panini's sutra 3-1-26 observes that Dasas and Karmakars (employees) both, work for food and clothing. Therefore, 'Das' and 'Artisan' both enjoyed equal social status. In times of 'Panini' and 'Patanjali' also, Das was not identified with slave.

System of slavery was in existence in India since ancient times and Das was considered as a slave is the view firmly held by D.R. Chanana. However, he has also observed that 'Das and Artisans who worked in sowing operations in the fields were paid in proportion to their work  $1\frac{1}{4}$  'Paṇa' every month and were also given cooked rice (31).

It, therefore, follows that 'Das' was not used as Synonym for slave.

In the opinion of Kosambi, parallel social system as was prevalent in Eastern Europe based on the polarization of society in two Distinct classes viz. Master and slaves was not existing in India. Similarly employment of slaves instead of animals and the trade in human beings were hardly found in India. Nevertheless, the system of human bondage (i.e. labour bonded to landlords for generation to generation) was existing in India (D.D. Kosambi - An Introduction to Indian History).

From the discussion so far it can be inferred that in India since ancient times 'Agriculture' was the basic industry/vocation. As a consequence, village/institution came into existence and different castes carrying on various trades/professions for agricultural and auxiliary activities as well as for meeting domestic needs came into existence. Thus social structure involving different castes and communities, sprung up. Slaves were not employed for doing Agricultural operations. Then a question arises as to who were the people so engaged in agriculture? When did the class of agricultural labour employed on wages evolve? What was the position of its wages, economic and social status? It would be worthwhile to seek answers to these other related problems.

Thousands of years B.C. or even prior to that period nomadic living of the people in India had come to an end and they had taken to 'Agriculture'. Institution of village had also come into existence - Numerous references to this effect are found in 'Rigveda' and other vedic literature as we have seen earlier. But the fact remains that in ancient Indian History, only meagre information is available in regard to 'Agricultural Labour' class.

It may be that in 'Rigveda' times, there were no two distinct classes as farmers (peasants) and agricultural labour. Further at that time, about 4/5th of the populace was having agriculture as its profession and these people used to cultivate themselves their own lands. As a result the number of agricultural labour employed on wages was comparatively very small. The number of landless persons was negligible. Rich and well placed persons owning larger lands could only employ agricultural labour on wages for

cultivating their lands. In Rigveda, therefore, no reference is found to wages or even to agricultural labour (32).

In vedic times golden coin called 'NISHKA' was minted but sale-purchase transactions were put through with the help of 'Barter system' i.e. exchange of articles. No mention is, therefore, made to wages. Labour was paid for in the form of grains, food, clothing and other necessities, as has been pointed out by Purushottam Chandra Jain (33). It therefore, appears that the class of Agricultural labour was in existence in vedic times also.

'Dasis' (Maid servants) or their daughters used to undertake agricultural activities according to a reference found in 'Atharva Veda' (34). We have already drawn a conclusion after detailed discussion earlier, that, in vedic times, 'Das' or 'Dasis' were not slaves. A further inference can be drawn that in Atharva Veda times even women were also engaged in Agricultural activities.

Shri Sarin further stated that in ancient times the prevalent practice was that members of a family, particularly women and children were expected to help husbands, fathers or guardians in agricultural activities. It was considered to be their prime duty. However, according to him, ploughing of fields, sowing, husking etc. were the work of agricultural labour, known as 'Krishivala', 'Vap' and 'Dhānyakṛt' (धान्यकृत) (34).

Though not in the times of 'Mantras' but in those of 'Sūtras' change appears to have taken place in agrarian system. Mention has been made of 'Das' working in agricultural industry in 'shroutasutra'. Two 'Dasas' were handed over along with foodgrains, animals and plough - describes 'Katyayan Shroutasutra' (35).

No distinct classes as 'Landlords' and 'Agricultural Labour' were in existence in India in ancient times. But with the passage of time, society was divided in four varnas. They were 'Brahmin', 'Kshatriya', 'Vaishya' and 'Shudra' based on the principle of division of labour and nature of work and qualifications. It was the rule that agriculture and allied professions were to be undertaken by 'Vaishya Varna'. The available compilation of various 'Sāṃhitās' and 'Dharmasūtras' makes this position quite clear. 'Sāṃkhya Sāṃhita' lays down that Trading, Agriculture and Animal Husbandry are the special responsibilities of 'Vaishya' (36).

वैश्यसाधिकं कृषि वाणिज्यं पशुपाल्यं कुसीदम्।

Vaiśyasādikam Kṛṣi Vāṇijyam Paśupālyam Kusidam.

It has been stated in 'Gautama Dharmasutra' that it is the right of 'Vaishyas' to undertake 'Trading', 'Agriculture', 'Animal Husbandry' and 'Money lending.' Vasishta Dharma Sūtra' and 'Harita Sāṃhitā' also describes duty of Vaishya in like manner (37).

As 'Vaishya' community was quite rich, the agricultural work in their fields was carried on by employing landless agricultural labour. Generally 'Shudras' used to work as such labour, because they did not own any land or property.

### 3. PERIOD OF RAMAYANA & MAHABHARATA

**Period of Ramayana** - In this period, agriculture had earned place of prestige and honour. 'Brahmin' class and the Rulers also used to take pleasure in Agriculture as a

hobby. As the Rulers themselves were personally involved in agricultural activities an example was set before the society and that also further boosted the prestige and honour associated with agriculture. In Ramayana it has been mentioned that the King Janaka was himself ploughing the fields. While narrating the story of Sita's birth to 'Vishwamitra' Janaka says "While I was ploughing the field, I found Sitā underneath and I brought her up as my daughter" (38).

अथ मे कृषतः क्षेत्रे लाङ्गलादुत्थिता मम ।

क्षेत्रं शोधयता लब्ध्वा नाम्नी सीतेति विश्रुता ।

भूतलादुत्थिता सा तु व्यवर्धिता ममात्मजा ॥

Atha me kṛṣataḥ Kṣetre lāṅgalādutthitā mama.

Kṣetram śodhayatā labdhā nāmni sīteti viśrutā.

Bhūtalādutthitā sā tu vyavardhitā mamātmajā ॥

Ramayana 1.66. 13-34

Shri Jain further states that 'Trijat', though a Brahmin took to agriculture as a means of livelihood. In the period of 'Ramayana', agricultural production technology had widely developed. Dams and canals used to be built in those times also.

Therefore, peasants (agriculturists) were quite rich. It is forcefully argued that there was never a famine in the reign of Rama, though such famine occurred in the reign of King 'Dasharatha'. During the reign of 'Rama', two types of crops were harvested. The agricultural land, totally dependent on rains was called Adeva Mātrikā (अदेव मातृका) while the one dependent on river or canal water was known as 'Nadimātrkā' (39). Since Lord Ramchandra himself used to look after the enrichment of agricultural land and the welfare of peasants, agricultural industry prospered. When 'Bharata' met 'Ramchandra' at 'Chitrakoot', Rama inquired of him thus, "whether people settled in kosal province, where crop was always rich, are happy? whether you show special concern for peasants and the peasants undertaking animal husbandry? whether you bestow favours on them, because the prosperity of a Nation depends on them." (40), Lord Rama, who was having such concern and affinity for peasants in his heart, had also taken into consideration the interest for agricultural labour. Agricultural labour received full protection in the kingdom of 'Rama'.

While he was having a dialogue with 'Bharata', Lord Rama observed. "Kingdom where food and wages are not given to the labour at proper time, tends to be detested. As a consequence, perils befall it".

Elsewhere it has been mentioned that status of labour is equal to that of "Deities", 'Senior Citizens' and 'Brahmins' (41). From the foregoing, it is clear that in Ramayana Age, harmony existed between two sectors of society; one comprising of Power wielding people, rich and influential class and the other of economically backward and debilitated agricultural labour. As conscious efforts were made to safeguard the interests of agricultural labour, no tension, contradiction or conflict existed in the society. The whole populace was generally happy and content. This may be the meaning of 'Rama's Rule'.

#### **Mahabharat Period**

Sufficient and special material is not available to throw light on the then prevalent conditions of agricultural labour in 'Mahabharata Age'. However, it appears that 'the Rulers and common people had sympathy for agricultural labour, as was visible in Ramayana period. Interests of this class were well taken care of.' Following observation is found in a citation.

Narada inquires of Yudhisthira, "Are you taking proper and due care of workers in your empire? Whether you place full trust in them? Prosperity of a nation rests on the cooperation of labour". (42).

In Mahabharata period a reliable system for providing water from lakes and tanks for irrigating agricultural land was in existence. Agriculture was not entirely dependent on rains. Needs of peasants relating to loans and supply of crop-seeds were well met at proper times. Honest officers were appointed by the Rulers for looking after agriculture and animal husbandry.

The Great Poet has said that the Nation's happiness and prosperity were dependent on this industry.

A reference is found from which it is seen that agricultural labourers also were given food and were paid wages properly and regularly (43).

#### **4. BUDDHIST AND JAIN PERIOD**

After the end of Vedic period and in early years of Buddhist literature, it is clearly mentioned that distinct classes in the Society had emerged. Agricultural industry was the base of economic system. Iron tools like sickle etc. were being used on an increasing scale. Large cities were founded. Scope of economic system widened and it became more complex. As a result, need for employment of labour underwent a change from that of earlier period and also increased employment opportunities. Therefore, further necessity arose for employing labour on wages for agricultural work, on a very large scale. In Buddhist literature, therefore, it has been mentioned that Dasas, labourers and servants used to work in fields.

In Buddhist period, following classes emerged in the society [1] Rich and wealthy peasants, 2] Middle Class agriculturists owning few acres of land, [3] Farmers owning very small pieces of land i.e. Marginal farmers [4] Agricultural labourers working for wages (44).

In Pali literature, big landlords were known as 'Gahapati'. We also come across a reference of two classes viz. 'Rich-poor' Sadhan-Adhana or 'wellplaced - illplaced'. Poor people used to work for wages (Karmakars), as they had neither capital nor knowledge. In early vedic period 'Gahapatis' were not holding large lands. The situation changed in Buddhist period. Gahapatis became rich and influential. They used to get their lands cultivated by Dasas or Karmakars. 'Kumamil' holds the view that Gahapatis never toiled themselves (45). Since Gahapatis could get the shelter and protection of the kings, they were able to force physical labour on 'Karmakars'.

In 'Suttanipat Jataka', a reference is found to a brahmin named 'Kashi-Bharadwaj'. He was a peasant residing in Eknala village in South Magadha. It is said, that, he was

having 500 ploughs and bullocks in large numbers. He used to employ large number of labourers on wages. On other big farm estates also labourers used to work as 'daiji wagers' (46).

An interesting and illuminating episode which shows the total ignorance of three princes as regards agricultural and food productions, has been mentioned in 'Dhammapad'.

Three princes, Kimbil, Bhaddiya and Anuruddha were debating one day as to what was the source of 'Meals'. Kimbil said that it came from foodgrain warehouse. Bhaddiya told him that that was not the case. Meal is received from oven (Boiler). Anuruddha said, "Both of you do not know as to how corn is grown. It comes through precious stone-studded golden utensils". (47)

This tale clearly brings out the fact that cultivation of land belonging to kings and princes was totally dependent on agricultural labour, employed on wages because it is evident that such wages were paid through the accumulated wealth of rich and wealthy people and the Rulers. It is mentioned in 'Gangamala Jataka' that 'Bodhisatwa' used to work in fields and elsewhere for wages for his maintenance. Similar reference is found in 'Sutano Jataka.' He used to receive 1/2 to 1 1/2 'pan' (a coin) per day as wages. (48)

In 'Thananja sutta' (Jain literature) wage earning labourers are placed in four classes, viz (1) Daily worker (Divasabhayag), (2) Worker in Transport Industry, (3) Worker engaged on contract basis (4) Worker drawing wages in proportion to work executed.

Exhaustive information relating to service or work conditions of labour during this period is not available. Stray references regarding holidays allowed to labour are found. Labourer drawing wages was free to partake in religious festivals. However, he was not entitled to any wages for such days. So it was quite impossible for him to abstain from work even for a day. A story goes that a certain labourer (Karmakar) refused to avail of a holiday on a religious occasion. He preferred to work for his master instead; as he badly needed money for his family. It was quite possible for him to stay away from work, pleading sickness but he could not do so. In that case, he would have been required to forego daily wages. It is apparent that paid sick leave was not granted to workers in those times (49).

It is clear from the above that worker was helpless in the absence of any service conditions. However, there is evidence to indicate that worker did not work diligently and honestly.

Landlord used to regard labourer as a burden since labourers did not take interest in work. Just idling away time, waiting for wages at the end of day, was common mental attitude of labourer. He was not concerned whether allotted work was finished or not. References are found where it is contended that labourer used to shirk work though landlord himself was engaged in work for the whole day (49).

Since labour did not get any paid holidays for festivals or during illness and since no other relief was allowed to him, tendency to shirk work could have developed under unbearable pressure of workload.

Who were working as agricultural labour in that period?

It is seen that generally Shudras used to work as agricultural labourers as per established customs and traditions; since they were devoid of money and power.

However, poverty is the curse that not only affects the shudras but others also. This truth was quite evident in ancient times also, as it is today. In the period of Buddhism also, the same conditions prevailed. Poverty was the enemy of both i.e. Shudras and Brahmins, as has been borne out by sufficient proof.

'Brahmin' also used to do the work of grazing the cows and sheep for 'wages' as mentioned in 'Jataka'. As mentioned hereinbefore some Brahmins like 'Kashi Bharadwaj' were no doubt wealthy and influential landlords in that period. But in contrast, there were also some Brahmins, who owned very small lands. In one of the 'Jatakas' a reference is made to a Brahmin who possessed only one Bullock and who himself used to undertake agricultural work (50).

##### 5. PANINI AND PATANJALI ON AGRICULTURAL LABOUR

In the times of 'Panini' economic transactions were put through either by way of barter or by exchange of money. Therefore, terms 'wages' and 'wage earners' find a place in 'Panini's Aṣṭadhyayi' (51). It may be noted here that these terms have been used for the first time by 'Panini' (52). Panini has also classified the wage-earners as 'skilled', 'unskilled' and 'Karmakar (Ordinary Worker)'. Labour employed on monthly wages has also been mentioned by him. Agricultural labour was placed in 'unskilled' class of workers. Village artisans such as Iron-smith, Carpenter etc. were recognised as 'skilled' workers. Wages used to be paid either in the form of foodgrains or money. It may be inferred that agricultural labour - working class had swelled to such an extent, at that time, that it was felt necessary to classify these workers.

##### Patanjali (188 years B.C) :

Patanjali has referred to agricultural labour in his 'Mahabhashya'.

एकान्ते तूष्णीम् आसीन उच्यते

तत्र भवितव्यम् पञ्चभिः हंसैः कृषति इति ।

Ekānte Tūṣṇim āseena Uchyate.

Tatra bhavitavyam pañcabhiḥ hamsaiḥ Kṛṣati ti

Peasants who used to get their land cultivated by employing labour have been described here. Since workers were employed, peasants (owners) could take rest and would only supervise the work (53). In those times, labourers used to get 5, 6 or 10 coins by way of daily wages. Reference to this effect (Pañchkāma Śikah, Shat-Kama Śikah, Daśakama Śikah) is found. Generally, a worker used to receive every month wages amounting to one 'Karshapan' (54).

Patanjali also refers to one other form of agricultural labour, as Agvinaḥ Karmakarah. He used to receive a cow, as wages for his work. Patanjali refers to this class of labour, which used to put in work as per contract, till cow is handed over (by the landlord) to him.

In those times, groups or gangs of workers were in existence. Workers forming such a group worked together. Even if any worker was injured or was incapacitated by an

accident while working no hindrance was caused as other members of the group completed the job. Patanjali has said.

यो याम् दुर्बलः सन् ।

बलविद्धः सह भारम् वहति ॥

Yo Yām durbalaḥ san

Balavidbhah saha bhāram vahati !

Unity, affinity and cooperation exhibited by the workers in those times is really praiseworthy. It is an indication of sense of fulfilment of duty. as it also reflects the progressive and noble nature of the working class.

Patanjali has placed the workers in two categories viz.

(1) clever, intelligent and dedicated workers, (2) Idle worker.

यः योष्णाम् करोति सः उष्णकः ।

यः सिताम् करोति सः सिताकः ॥

Yaḥ yoṣṇām karoti saḥ uṣṇakaḥ

Yaḥ sitām karoti saḥ sitākaḥ

'Uṣṇaka' means clever and 'sitāk' means idle worker.

Agricultural labourers associated with harvesting of standing crops in the fields were termed as 'Lāvak'. No specific or detailed reference is available to indicate his wages but generally he used to receive 1/16th of the farm produce (55).

It can be safely said that this was barely sufficient to maintain himself.

For separating husk from grain (सूप) soopa (winnowing basket) was used that time. Labour undertaking this job was called 'tandulik' (तन्दुलिकः)

Practice was to store foodgrain in big earthen jars. Agricultural labour undertaking this job was called 'Kumbhidhānya' (कुम्भिधान्य).

From the foregoing, it is seen that in times of Patanjali agricultural-labourers were employed for cutting the crop, for separating husk from grain and for storing the foodgrains. Agricultural labour as a distinct class of society had come into existence.

## 6. SHUKRA NITI ON AGRICULTURAL LABOUR

It cannot be definitely stated as to when Shukra Niti was written. However, we find that Kauṭilya in his *Arthashastra* has mentioned the name of the poet Ushana or Shukracharaya, the author of famous treatise, Shukraniti. Therefore it can be definitely said that Shukraniti was written before Kautilya i.e. 321 B.C. (55A).

In shukraniti we find elaborate discussion in respect of wages of an employee or a labourer, his service conditions, the system of payment of wages, rest period, sick leave and wages during that period, pension, incentive, bonus etc. This fact is as surprising as it throws light on the progressive labour policy in ancient Bharat which can be seen from the following discussion.

भूतिदाने सदा सौरं चान्द्रं कौसीद्वृद्धिषु । कल्पयेत्सावनं नित्यं दिनभृत्येऽवधौ सदा ॥

Bhṛtidāne sadā sauraṁ cāndraṁ Kausīdavrddhiṣu.  
Kalpayetsāvanam nityam dinabhṛtye' vadhaḥ sadā

Ch. 2.384

In the matter of payment of wages normally the 'Saur' month is taken into consideration. In the matter of interest calculation, the 'Chandramas' is taken into consideration and in the matter of payment of wages of daily workers, the calculation is from 'Amāvāsya'.

कार्यमाना कालमाना कार्यकालमितिस्त्रिधा । भृतिरुक्ता तु तद्विज्ञैः सा देया भाषिता यथा ॥

अ. २.३८५

Kāryamānā kālamānā kāryakālamitistridhā.  
Bhṛtiruktā tu tadvijñaiḥ sā deyā bhāṣitā yathā

Ch. 2.385

Piece wage, time wage and combination of period and job are three types of wages. Each worker should be paid according to agreement.

अयं भारस्त्वया तत्र स्थाप्यस्वेतावतीं भृतिम् । दास्यामि कार्यमाना सा कीर्तिता तद्विदेशकैः ॥

अ. २.३८६

Ayam bhārastvayā tatra sthāpyastvetāvatīm bhṛtim.  
Dāsyāmi kāryamānā sā kīrtitā tadviśākaiḥ

Ch. 2.386

You carry out this piece of work for which you will get this much amount. This is called the piece wage.

वत्सरे वत्सरे वापि मासि मासि दिने दिने ।

एतावतीं भृतिं तेऽहं दास्यामीति च कालिका ॥

अ. २.३८७

Vatsare vatsare vāpi māsi māsi dine dine  
Etāvatīm bhṛtim tehaṁ dāsyāmiti ca kālīkā

Ch. 2. 387

You will get per annum, per month, per day so much amount as wages. This is called payment according to the period (Time Wages).

एतावता कार्यमिदं कालेनापि त्वया कृतम् ।

भृतिमेतावतीं दास्ये कार्यकालमिता च सा ॥

अ. २. ३८८

Etāvatā Kāryamidam Kālenāpi tvayā kṛtam  
Bhṛtimetāvatīm dāsyē kāryakālamitā ca sā

ch. 2. 388

For doing as much of the job during so much time you get so and so wage. This is called wages based on period and quantum of work.

न कुर्याद् भृतिलोपं तु तथा भृतिविलम्बनम् । अवश्यपोष्यभरणा भृतिर्मध्या प्रकीर्तिता ॥

अ. २. ३८९

Na kuryād bhṛtilopam tu tathā bhṛtivilambanam  
Avaśyapoṣyabharaṇā bhṛtirmadhyā prakīrtitā

ch. 2. 389

परिपोष्या भृतिः श्रेष्ठा समानाच्छादनार्थिका ।  
भवेदेकस्य भरणं यया सा हीनसंज्ञिका ॥

अ. २.३९०

Paripoṣyā bhr̥tiḥ śreṣṭhā samānācchādanārthikā  
Bhavedekasya bharaṇam yayā sā hīnasamjñikā ch. 2. 390

There should be no fraudulencē in the payment of wages, which must be disbursed on time. That wage which is just sufficient for satisfying the bare needs is termed (Madhyamā) tolerable, that which can meet all the needs of food, clothing and shelter etc. of the family is said to be better (Sreṣṭha). Wages just enough for the sustenance of one person is regarded of a mean category (Hīna).

The concepts of living wages, unfair labour practice and payment of wages due, were more progressive and pro-labour in India 2000 years before, than the present views in vogue.

यथा यथा तु गुणवान्भृतकस्तद्भृतिस्तथा ।  
संयोज्या तु प्रयत्नेन नृपेणात्महिताय वै ॥

अ. २. ३९१

Yathā yathā guṇavānbhṛtakastadbhr̥tistathā  
Samyojyā tu prayatnena nṛpeṇātmahitāya vai

ch. 2. 391

According to the merits of a worker his wages should be determined. In other words, merit should be adequately recognised or rewarded. The king gains by such a policy.

अवश्यपोष्यवर्गस्य भरणं भृतकाद् भवेत्  
तथा भृतिस्तु संयोज्या यद् योग्या भृतकाय वै ॥

अ. २. ३९२.

Avaśyapoṣyavargasya bharaṇam bhr̥takād bhavet  
Tathā bhr̥tistu samyojyā yad yogyā bhr̥takāya vai

ch. 2. 392

The wages should be determined in such a way that he can feed his dependants, and according to his worth.

ये भृत्या हीनभृतिकाः शत्रवस्ते स्वयंकृताः । परस्य साधकास्ते तु छिद्रकोशप्रजाहराः ॥

अ. २. ३९३

Ye bhr̥tyā hīnabhr̥tikāḥś śatravaste svayamkṛtāḥ  
Parasya sādhakāste tu chidrakośaprajāharāḥ

ch.2. 393.

Those who get less wages they are (as if) enemies created by us. They can side with the enemy and noticing any loopholes in our system, can denude the treasure and thus cause pain and suffering to the citizenry.

भृत्यानां गृहकृत्यार्थं दिवा यामं समुत्सृजेत् ।  
निशि यामत्रयं नित्यं दिनभृत्येऽर्धयामकम् ॥

अ. २. ३९७.

Bhr̥tyānām gr̥hakṛtyārtham divā yāmam samutsrjet  
Niśi yāmatrayam nityam dinabhr̥tye' rdhayāmakam

ch. 2. 397.

The servants should be allowed some time off during the day to attend their domestic chores i.e. one prahar (3 hours) in the day and three prahars in the night. If he be only a day worker, he could be given only half prahar off during day.

पादहीनां भृतिं त्वा तें दद्यात् त्रैमासिकं ततः ।

पञ्चवत्सरभृत्ये तु न्यूनाधिक्यं यथा तथा ॥

अ. २.३९९.

Pādahīnām bhṛtiṁ tvārte dadyāt traimāsikam tataḥ

Pañcavatsarabhṛtye tu nyūnādhikyam yathā tathā

ch. 2. 399.

If a servant happens to be sick for the entire year, he could be paid equivalent to three months' salary, deducting one fourth from the same. Should the servant happen to have completed five years' service, this one fourth deduction could appropriately be lessened i.e. only a nominal cut should be made in his case.

षाण्मासिकी तु दीर्घार्तिं तदूर्ध्वं न च कल्पयेत् ।

नैव पक्षार्धमार्तस्य हातव्याऽल्पापि वै भृतिः ॥

अ. २. ४००.

ṣaṇmāsikī tu dīrghārtam tadūrdhvaṁ na ca kalpayet

Naiva pakṣārdhamārtasya hātavyā' lpāpi vai bhṛtiḥ

ch. 2. 400.

If the sickness prolongs for more than a year, he should be given six months' wages, but not more. In cases where the period is limited to eight days, no deduction need be made.

ततः सेवां विना तस्मै भृत्यार्धं कल्पयेत्सदा ।

यावज्जीवं तु तत्पुत्रेऽक्षमे बाले तदर्धकम् ॥

अ. २. ४०३.

Tataḥ sevām vinā tasmai bhṛtyardham kalpayet sadā

Yāvajjīvaṁ tu tatputre' kṣame bāle tadardhakam

ch. 2. 403

After the completion of 40 years' service the king should pay half the salary as pension during the life time of the employee. On his death minor son be paid 1/4 of the wages.

कार्याष्टमांशं वा दद्यात्कार्यं द्रागधिकं कृतम् ।

स्वामिकार्ये विनष्टे यस्तत्पुत्रे तद्भृतिं वहेत् ॥

अ. २. ४०५.

Kāryāṣṭamāṁsaṁ vā dadyāt kāryam drāgadhikam kṛtam

Swāmikārye vinaṣṭo yastatputre tadbhṛtiṁ vahet

If a servant were to execute a piece of work expeditiously or in excess, over and above the normal output, he should be paid as incentive bonus one eighth of his wages. A worker dying on duty in exercise of his master's task, his son should be paid his wages.

As stated above we find that provisions regarding Bonus, Pension, Sick Leave, Living Wages, Unfair Labour Practices are made in Śukranīti. Taking into consideration the legal protection available to the Daily, Monthly and Annual Paid Agricultural

workers about 2300 years ago in India, the present critical, depressing and deteriorating socio-economic conditions of the Agricultural workers appears to be most heart-rending and unfortunate.

## 7. KAUTILYA'S ARTHASHASTRA ON RURAL LABOUR

It is generally believed that Kauṭilya finished his treatise 'Arthaśāstra' between the years 321 and 300 B.C. During this period, labour was employed in agriculture as has been borne out by numerous references found in the works of 'Kauṭilya', 'Nārada', 'Bṛhaspati' etc. In 'Arthaśāstra' it is stated :

बहुहलपरिकृष्टायां स्वभूमौ । दास-कर्मकर-दण्डप्रतिकर्तृभिर्वापयेत् ॥

Bahuhalaparikṛṣṭāyām Svabhūmau

Dāsa - karmakara - daṇḍapratikartṛbhir vāpayet (56).

It means, that the Chief Officer of Agriculture Dept. (Sitādhyakṣa) should get the agricultural jobs executed by 'Dāsas', workers employed on wages or 'Prisoners undergoing sentences'. This direction may be relating to agricultural lands of State (King).

Agricultural labour has also been mentioned in 'Nārada-smṛti'.

भृतावनिश्चितायां तु दशभागं समाप्नुयाः ।

लाभ-गोबीज-सस्यान् वणिगोपकृषीवलः ॥

Bhṛtāvaniścītāyām tu daśabhāgaṁ samāpnuyāḥ

Lābha-gobīja-sasyān vaṇiggopakṛṣīvalāḥ

In Kauṭilya's times social and economic structure had undergone considerable change from Buddhist period. In that period landlords had uncontrolled power over workers and Dāsas. No legal protection was available to labour. Consequently this class fell prey to injustice and cruelty (of the landlords). In Kauṭilya's 'Arthaśāstra', for the first time, reference is found to the comprehensive regulations relating to labour.

In those times, labour had a right to enter into a contract with the landlord. Labour was free to negotiate the terms of contract for wages for a specific job or work. It is worthwhile to take a note of the following references in 'Arthaśāstra' - Adhikaraṇa - 3, Adhyāya - 13, 14, Chapter 65 (57).

"He (worker) should receive the stipulated wages. Had wages not been specifically predetermined, then he should get wages in proportion to work done and time spent". Artha - 3-14-27.

When there is no pre-agreement regarding wages, agricultural labourer should get 1/10th portion of the crop harvested by him. 1/10th portion of ghee to shepherd for grazing cows and buffaloes and 1/10th portion of commodity traded by a businessman.

कर्षकः सस्यानां गोपालकः सर्पिषां वैदेहकः पण्यानामात्मना व्यवहृतानां दशभागम् असम्भाषितवेतनो लभेत ॥ ३.१३.२८

Karṣakaḥ Sasyānām Gopālakaḥ Sarpiṣaṁ Vaidehakaḥ

Paṇyānāmātmanā Vyavahṛtānām Daśabhāgaṁ asambhāṣitavetano Labheta

Arthaśāstra 3.14.28

Compared to the portion payable as wages i.e. 1/16th in Patañjali-Sūtra, this rate viz. 1/10 th mentioned in Arthaśāstra, existed in earlier period, is quite favourable to the worker. It can be said that Kauṭilya has adopted a more generous view in this regard.

However, wages at the predetermined rate, if that be the case, were to be paid.

3.14.20

It, therefore, follows that Kauṭilya had fixed minimum wages appropriate to that period and the labour was free to negotiate and gain higher wages.

It has to be specially noted that Kauṭilya has not permitted the landlords to have unfettered right to decide the quantity of work done by the labour. It was necessary to get ascertained the nature and quantity of work done by the worker, by a person working nearby i.e. this dispute was to be settled in the presence of such third parties. 3-14-26.

It may be observed that the tendency to exploit labour by not paying proper wages has been in existence from ancient times till today. Kauṭilya had tried to check this unjust and high handed behaviour of the masters.

Detailed guidance and procedure has been provided in 'Arthaśāstra' to solve the dispute relating to the work, if any.

'Decision in respect of dispute should be taken with the help of witnesses', 3-14-31.

'If there be no witnesses, inquiry should be held at the site of work' 3-14-32.

If landlord fails to pay the wages as per the contract, he should be punished, and or fined - Kauṭilya has advised.

Landlord should be fined to the extent of 1/10 th of wages or 6 Paṇas, if he fails to pay wages' - 3-14-33.

'If he refused to pay wages, 12 Paṇas or 1/5th of wages should be imposed as fine'. 3-14-34. [ 'Paṇa' was a silver coin (58) ]

Kauṭilya has adopted a staunch posture against workers, who were idle or evaded work.

'A shirking servant receiving wages should be fined 12 'Paṇas'. He should be put in prison, till he executes the job. 3-14-1.

Kauṭilya has sympathetically considered the inability of a worker to fulfil his obligations due to reasons beyond his control.

"If incapacitated, ill or calamity stricken or if the nature of work was despicable, worker had a right of not doing the job or to get it executed by others". 3-14-2.

'Or landlord was free to get the job done from others at worker's cost'. 3-14-3.

'Once the work was contracted by consent of both the parties, it was binding on both to honour the agreement and in case of breach, penalty has been stipulated in 'Arthaśāstra' providing for fine for both'.

'You (landlord) should not get the work executed by someone else and I (worker) should also not work for others. Whenever, such condition was laid down, landlord who failed to get the job executed by worker or worker who evaded work were to be fined 12 Paṇas'. 3-14-4.

Kauṭilya was the advocate of the theory 'No work-no wages'. Some of the earlier philosophers held more charitable view favouring worker. Mention to this effect has been made by Kauṭilya himself in 'Arthaśāstra'. Kauṭilya was a staunch realist.

Following references in 'Arthaśāstra' deserve special attention. 'Earlier some philosophers had held the view that a worker who reported for work but was not allotted any work, should be deemed to have executed the work. 3-14-6.

'However, this view has not found favour with Kauṭilya,. 3-14-7.

Kauṭilya has put forth, the following argument in support of his view.

'Wages are paid for work done and not for the work not done'. 3-14-8.

Kauṭilya had also prescribed that once a worker starts a job, it is not open to landlord to stop him midway. Not only that but Kauṭilya had also made a progressive provision that extra compensation be paid to worker, who has done more work or put in more hours than stipulated for.

'If the landlord gets only part of work executed and he prevents a worker from further work, then it has to be assumed that worker has executed the complete work'. 3-14-9.

'In case worker completes more work than agreed, such extra labour should not go unrewarded'. 3-14-11.

Though wage agreement, penalty to be imposed on landlord or worker in case of breach of agreement, additional payment for extra work etc. have been dealt with in 'Arthaśāstra', detailed/exhaustive information regarding actual wages received by agricultural labour, is not forthcoming.

However, stray references on this point are found.

षण्डवाट-गोपालक-दास-कर्मकरेभ्यो यथापुरुषपरिवापं भक्तं कुर्यात्।

सपादपणिकं च मासं दद्यात्।

अर्थशास्त्र २.२४-२८

Ṣaṇḍavātā- gopālaka - dāsa - karmakarebhyo yathāpuruṣaparivāpaṁ bhaktam kuryāt  
Sapādapaṇikam ca māsaṁ dadyāt/

Arthaśāstra, 2, 24, 28

'Sitādhyak'sa' (Chief Officer of Agriculture Department of State) should pay monthly 1<sup>1/4</sup> Pana and also give meals to the appointed workers.

However, it has been laid down in 'Nārada-Smṛti' that workers are responsible for proper up-keep of the tools provided to them - Nārada- smṛti 6-4.

In Pre-Kauṭilya times, land and Forests were a plenty. A person, who cultivated the land, after proper grōoming by cleaning forest, used to become the owner of such land. 'Manu' has also accorded his consent to this custom. However, 'Kauṭilya' introduced certain changes in this custom. He placed certain restrictions. If fallow land was given for cultivation to a tenant and if he allowed it to remain fallow, such land was to be taken away from such tenant and allotted to some one else, as per the rule. He was of the opinion that such a step was necessary in the interest of nation and for higher foodgrain production. Following mention in 'Arthaśāstra' is quite illustrative.

"Suitable land for cultivation be given to those, who are willing to pay the land cess,

during their life time. If land is allowed to remain fallow for a year, it should not be taken away from the tenant”.

But land should be taken away from such tenants who allow land to remain fallow, permanently (59).

It is therefore clear that ‘Kauṭilya’ had both i.e. protection to tenant and welfare of nation at his heart. It also becomes clear that amongst the agricultural labour, there was a section which used to cultivate land as a tenant or on payment of produce to landlord.

Like tenancy, system of ‘Baṭāīdārī’ was prevalent in those times. Reference to this system is found for the first time in ‘Arthaśāstra’.

Arthaśāstra 2-23.

In Maurya period this system got a great momentum. The beginning might have been made in ‘Arthaśāstra’ period. ‘Baṭāīdār’, sharer in crop as a separate class of agricultural labour was in existence besides tenants in those times.

Kauṭilya has suggested an additional scheme in ‘Arthaśāstra’ for the benefit of rural poor or agricultural labour. It is well known that the Maharashtra State Government has introduced for the first time ‘Employment Guarantee Scheme’ during the famine of 1972 in Maharashtra and later on enacted a legislation for ‘Employment Guarantee’. As a result, rural poor and agricultural labour were assured of employment in difficult times, such as famine etc. International labour organisation has also showered praise on this scheme. Surprisingly we come across source of this scheme in Kauṭilya’s ‘Arthaśāstra’, as has been brought out from the following excerpt.

“King should help citizens, in famine by stocking foodgrain and seeds, or should provide for their maintenance by starting various projects like Building of Castle or Dam construction or should share with them the foodgrain in stock”.

Arthaśāstra - 4-3-17.

The scheme of distribution of foodgrain, as put forth by ‘Kauṭilya’ appears to be more progressive. It is far more beneficial and charitable than the one in modern times viz. ‘Food for work’ programme.

Kauṭilya has laid more emphasis in ‘Arthaśāstra’ on the need for government administration to adopt such a realistic approach to the problems of hard toiling agricultural labour, forming the lowest rung of social structure, so as to ensure social justice to the vast toiling masses.

## **8. MUGHAL PERIOD AND MODERN TIMES**

### **Mughal Period**

Beginning in 13th century, Mughal period spreads over a period of about 600 years upto 18th century. Emperor Akbar first introduced land revenue system in his empire. Mughal empire also became politically stable. He tried to build up competent state administrative machinery by appointing officers for effective implementation of land revenue system. The local rulers, leaders who accepted sovereignty of Mughal Empire were given powers by Emperor Akbar, to collect land revenue in their realm. On collecting such revenue, specified portion thereof was required to be remitted to Central

Power, as per the rules. In return, they were compensated by way of certain portion of land revenue or some Rent-free land. They were known as 'Landlords' or 'Mansabdars'. Thus this new influential and powerful class came into existence in the rural social structure. They tried to extract rent in contravention of the rules. In Mughal period, peasants cultivating the land, secured hereditary rights to such land.

Landlords rebelled when central administration became less powerful and peasants helped them a lot due to common community bond.

In Mughal period primarily two classes emerged in rural agricultural economic system. (1) Small or Big landlords empowered to collect land revenue or officers appointed by Government for this purpose.

They used to receive either in cash or in the form of foodgrain, specified share of land revenue so collected.

(2) Peasants in large number who were engaged in cultivation of land.

Thus two distinct classes were noticeable in the rural social structure. However, Dr. D.N. Dhanagare has opined that it may be oversimplification of facts to sustain the view that such two distinct classes were in existence that time (60).

Prof. Irfan Habib (61) has published his papers, after conducting research into the systems of 'Agriculture', 'Land Revenue', 'Rural Social Structure' in Mughal period. It is his inference that during this period four classes came into existence. They were (1) Landlord, moneylender, foodgrain merchant. (2) Rich and wealthy peasant. (3) Large group of agriculturists or poor peasants. (4) Landless agricultural labour. The last i.e. fourth class, generally comprised of cobblers etc. from the community of untouchables. These people on the lowest rung of social hierarchy based on caste system, not only carried out their particular trade but also worked as agricultural labour in the fields. On account of rigid caste system so to say, a special reserve group of agricultural labour was formed.

What are the premises that drove Prof. Habib to conclude that four classes, as mentioned above came into existence in Mughal Period.

Studies were undertaken in respect of size and number of some of the abovementioned groups. Prof. S.R. Sharma has given the number of Landlords, Jahagirdars in Mughal period as follows (62).

| Realm     | Year | No. of Mansabdars |
|-----------|------|-------------------|
| Akbar     | 1590 | 1658              |
| Jehangir  | 1620 | 2069              |
| Shahjahan | 1637 | 8000              |
| Aurangzeb | 1690 | 11456             |

Subjects had to pay, in those times, tax in proportion to the value of estate. Tax-payers were placed in 3 categories. Prof. Habib has drawn the conclusion that four classes came into being on the basis of value of property and amount of tax, in Mughal period, as narrated above. According to him, the class of agricultural labour, working for wages, was in existence. This class used to work as labour in the fields of self-cultivated (Khudkasa) land of landlords. For a period of about one thousand years, the

Hindus offered valiant resistance and fought many battles against foreign Muslim Rule for their cultural and political freedom. However, during this period their economic condition deteriorated.

Under Muslim Rule, the Hindu Agriculturists had to pay nearly half of their agricultural produce to the rulers as land Revenue. In the period of Shahjahan's reign this share increased to 3/4th of the produce.

This kind of cruel economic exploitation of Hindu Agriculturists resulted into their pauperisation because of which they might have swelled the ranks as landless agricultural labourers. (63A)

Prof. D.N. Dhanagare has however, stated that this reasoning and conclusion of Prof. Habib, though apparently logical, suffers from certain drawbacks, as no scientifically based census was carried out in the said period. Similarly no proper record relating to owned lands was maintained (63). However, it can be safely said that process had started, during this period, for formation of new classes according to social and economic needs and interest.

Class of Agricultural labour was in existence. Cobblers and others socially untouchables, used to work as 'Agricultural Labour'.

### **Modern Times**

Views relating to the existence of 'Agricultural Labour class' right from Vedic Age to Mughal period have been discussed above. From the beginning of 19th century, when British Rule was firmly established in India, census was conducted periodically. However, details in respect of census are available only from 1871 and onwards. Based on this information, many authors have written about number of agricultural labour and its socio-economic status, employment opportunities etc. It would be worthwhile to take stock of these writings. It would be advantageous and convenient to consider the position of agricultural labour in different periods viz. from 1871 AD to 1931 AD and thereafter up to 1951 AD and the post independence period.

Table on p. 26 gives the occupational distribution of rural population and proportion of agricultural labourers during the period from 1871 to 1931. (64)

Surendra Patel has argued that as per the census conducted periodically from 1871 to 1931, the increase in the number of Agriculturists has not been steady and even. As per the table given above, the number was 46 millions in 1871, in 1881 it was 84 millions, in 1891, 1901 and in 1911, it exceeded 200 millions and in 1921 and 1931 it was 106 and 110 millions respectively. In 1901, the number of agricultural labour doubled as compared to the number in 1891 on account of the fact that the country had to face severe drought in the last decade of 19th century and many people were forced by circumstances to work as agricultural labour. Many families of agriculturists were obliged either to sell their lands due to drought conditions or found it economically more advantageous to work as labour than cultivating the land, even if land was not sold.

Shri Patel has drawn the conclusion from the above, that during the last 3 decades of 19th century, the proportion of agricultural labour to the total agriculturists was

**Table No. 1** (Figures in Million)

| Occupation                              | Adult Male<br>Workers | Male<br>Workers | Population<br>Supported |       |       | Working<br>Population |       |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|-------|-------|-----------------------|-------|
|                                         | 1871-72               | 1881            | 1891                    | 1901  | 1911  | 1921                  | 1931  |
| 1. Agriculturist<br>(Total)             | 45.7                  | 83.7            | 200.0                   | 204.1 | 225.3 | 106.3                 | 110.0 |
| comprising of                           |                       |                 |                         |       |       |                       |       |
| 2. Owners                               | 37.5                  | 71.2            | 175.4                   | 152.7 | 167.0 | 74.7                  | 28.4  |
| 3. On Rate Basis                        | -                     | -               | -                       | -     | 7.7   | 3.7                   | 4.2   |
| 4. Tenants                              | -                     | -               | -                       | -     | -     | -                     | 36.2  |
| 5. Agricultural<br>Labour               | 8.2                   | 12.5            | 25.5                    | 52.4  | 50.6  | 27.8                  | 42.2  |
| A. Agri. Labour                         | -                     | -               | -                       | 13.5  | 41.2  | 21.7                  | 33.5  |
| B. Unclassified<br>labour               | -                     | -               | -                       | 16.9  | 8.3   | 5.1                   | 7.5   |
| C. Plantation<br>labourers              | -                     | -               | -                       | 1.0   | 1.1   | 1.0                   | 1.2   |
| Proportion of<br>5 to 1 (in percentage) | 17.9                  | 14.9            | 12.8                    | 25.7  | 22.5  | 26.2                  | 38.0  |

[1] Source : S. J. Patel. *Agricultural Labour in Modern India & Pakistan*.

**Note** : Where number of workers on rate basis or tenants is not shown separately, it is included in the number of owner-agriculturists.

paltry. Thereafter, the number steadily increased. During the period from 1901 to 1911 this naturally decreased. Again from 1911 onwards, the same steadily increased. In 1911, it was 23% while in 1931 it was 38%. Prior to census in 1931, there had been severe famine. Crops were heavily damaged. Besides, agricultural produce prices had been affected by the economic recession in 1929-30. As a result, the rural social structure was in disarray and disturbed. Many agriculturists and other people took to labour (Agricultural).

Likewise, H.D. Malaviya has advocated that the proportion of agricultural labour which was 1/3 to the population engaged in agriculture shot up to 1/2 in 3 decades (1901 to 1931) (65). In a way Malaviya has lent support to the views of Surendra Patel.

The proportion of agricultural labour decreased from 19.9% to 18.1% during the years 1931-51 but in the same period, the number of people in Agricultural Industry increased. Increase in population was not much absorbed in industry.

Reasons may be that number of agricultural labourers preferred to work as tenants due to upward trend in prices of agricultural produce.

**(B) Socio Economic conditions of Agricultural Labour****1. WOMEN AS AGRICULTURAL LABOUR**

In India, like in other countries of the world women are engaged in agriculture as owners of land or as agricultural labour. Their participation in the process is in existence to a large extent. Out of total women workers, 80% are working in Agriculture or other allied industries.

It may be useful to consider the proportion of women workers in Agricultural and non-agricultural industries during the period 1901 to 1951 A.D.

**Table No. 2**

| Year | Total classified<br>Population<br>(In thousands) | Total classified<br>women workers | Women working<br>as 'Agr. labour<br>(In thousands) | %    |
|------|--------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|------|
| 1901 | 236.054                                          | 39.685                            | 25.436                                             | 10.8 |
| 1911 | 249.559                                          | 42.635                            | 29.710                                             | 11.9 |
| 1921 | 248.713                                          | 41.192                            | 29.288                                             | 11.8 |
| 1931 | 275.912                                          | 37.806                            | 25.588                                             | 9.3  |
| 1941 | 314.876                                          | 32.152                            | 16.922                                             | 5.4  |
| 1951 | 256.528                                          | 41.743                            | 31.244                                             | 8.7  |

[1A] Source : (M. G. Dongre. Khetihar Mazdoor Samasya Tatha Nirakaran)

It may be seen that the number of women workers in agriculture steadily increased during this period. A conclusion can be drawn that considering this number, in Indian Economy women played a very crucial role to a great extent (66).

**2. INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF AGRICULTURAL LABOUR**

The number of agricultural labour increased under British Rule. For about half a century after 1875 the problem of industrialisation was being debated in India. In western countries and particularly in England, the said period witnessed rapid growth of Industrialization but in India, process of ruralization of agriculturally oriented economic system was under way in the said period. Traditional artisanship was on the verge of extinction. Restrictions were imposed on the production and export of silk apparels. Textiles were imported on a very large scale, from Manchester and other cities in England. In the process, local handloom weavers were exposed to misery and hardship. Though the traditional handicrafts suffered a set back, comparatively modern industrialization process did not gather momentum. Therefore, the artisans swelled the ranks of agricultural labour.

Between 1881 to 1931, Industrialization process was rather stagnant. There was no growth in agricultural production. But population increased by about 10 crores. As there had not been any expansion of non-agricultural industries, the burden of this large increase in population fell on agriculture. Land-Man ratio decreased. Poor peasants

became landless. All these three factors contributed to the increase in the number of agricultural labour during 1881 to 1931.

### 3. CASTE AND AGRICULTURAL LABOUR

Since ancient times till the advent of British Rule, normally caste and occupation were intricately interconnected as discussed earlier. Downtrodden or untouchables occupying the lowest rung of hierarchical caste structure, generally worked as agricultural labourers. It would be worthwhile to find out whether there has been any change in this position during British Rule or in Post- Independence days.

In this context, some research scholars have conducted indepth studies.

According to Prof. Dharmakumar, in the first half of 19th century out of total rural population in South India, 17% to 25% was engaged as agricultural labourer. These labourers belonged to backward communities (3.)

Ramkrishna Mukherjee has analysed the census results in Bengal from 1931 to 1951. He concludes that in Bengal, the economic structure and the social structure are closely interconnected (66A). Similarly, V.R. Joshi (66B) has reached the same conclusion on the basis of 1951 census. He finds that excepting North and North-West India, in other parts of the country, backward class labourers formed a major part of agricultural labour, if we consider the total number of agriculturist and the number of agricultural labour. Out of the total agricultural labour, 88.6% belonged to lowest communities, while 10.4% and 1% belonged to middle and upper castes respectively. Social Welfare Department of Central Government has published a report of a committee on 'Untouchability, Economic and Educational progress of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes'. It has been mentioned there, that, majority of landless agricultural labourers belonged to scheduled caste and scheduled tribes. It has also been estimated that out of total 303.36 lakh scheduled caste and scheduled tribe workers, about 71% i.e. 219.03 lakhs are engaged in agriculture and out of the same 34.30% are landless agricultural labourers (66C).

Research Scholar, G.G. Kotovaky also holds concurrent view. He maintains that Agricultural Labour class mainly consists of people belonging to lowest backward communities (Scheduled Caste). They form the core of Indian agricultural labour (66D)

Another major constituent of agricultural labour class is that of tribals. As their land was grabbed by merchants or moneylenders, they generally started working as agricultural labour.

The gravity of the problem becomes apparent by one more factor. In 1961, 17% of the people were landless agricultural labourers and percentage of backward class communities was 33% of the total landless agricultural labourers. In addition, it has been noticed, that number of women belonging to backward class communities, working as agricultural labour is comparatively quite large.

It therefore follows that the problems of agricultural labour are not of one sector alone but are of castes and tribes. Remarkable resemblance is also noticed in the

hierarchies of social class structure and the social caste system. Barring exceptions over passage of time, the position continues that upper classes are owners of land generally while majority of people from backward castes and untouchables are engaged as agricultural labour.

In the post-independence period, certain laws relating to agriculture have been enacted. Prominent among these are (1) Abolition of Zamindari, (2) Land Ceiling and (3) Tenancy. After 1960, a new dimension was added to agricultural industry with progressive use of modern technology, improved seeds and chemical fertilizers. As a result, green revolution was witnessed in Punjab, Haryana etc. Agricultural production increased.

In the period 1964-1975, the number of rural families as well as agricultural labour families increased. The number of rural families rose from 70.4 millions in 1964-65 to 82.1 millions in 1974-75. Thus during the decade, it increased by 11.7 millions. Likewise, the number of families engaged in agricultural labour also increased. In 1974-75, it was to the extent of 86% of the total rural families (67).

As noted above with the introduction of modified 'High Yielding Varieties (of seeds) Programme' after 1967, agricultural production increased and this phase is known as 'Green Revolution'. But the striking fact is that in the Agricultural based advanced States, proportion of agricultural labour to the total number of agriculturist families increased. In Punjab and Haryana, it was 11.94% and 7.70% respectively in 1961. This rose correspondingly to 24.80% and 18.80% in 1971. In 1981, this percentage was 29.51 in Punjab and 20.17 in Haryana (68).

In the year 1981 the number of Agricultural Labourers in India was as shown in the table No. 3 (See page no 30).

Thus it will be seen that the number of Agricultural labourers is large in the States of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Maharashtra and Tamilnadu. 50% of the total number of the Agricultural Labourers in India is in the above Four States. On the contrary in the States like Punjab and Haryana, where the agricultural production is higher due to Green Revolution, the same is less than 2%.

In the States of Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab and Haryana the number of Agricultural Labour is 5% less than the total number in the whole of Bharat.

This percentage is very low in respect of Women agricultural workers. One of the contributing factors in increase in number of agricultural labour, is addition of middle and small landholders (less than 2 Hectares). As per the 1970-71 agricultural Census, their number was 49 millions. This works out to be 69.9% of total landholders. During the period from 1970-71 to 1976-77 the percentage increased to 72.7. The percentage of land cultivated by them increased from 20.9 to 23.5. The number of marginal farmers increased by 23% (1970-71 to 1975-76) (70).

#### **4. LAND OWNED BY AGRICULTURAL LABOUR**

Land owned by Agricultural Labour household is practically negligible. Following Table No 4 gives us an idea.

**Table No. 3**  
**AGRICULTURAL LABOUR IN INDIAN STATES - 1981**

| (1) States       | Agricultural Labours (000) |            |           | Agricultural Labour as percentage of Total Workers |            |           | Percentage Distribution of Agricultural Labour |            |            |
|------------------|----------------------------|------------|-----------|----------------------------------------------------|------------|-----------|------------------------------------------------|------------|------------|
|                  | Male (2)                   | Female (3) | Total (4) | Male (5)                                           | Female (6) | Total (7) | Male (8)                                       | Female (9) | Total (10) |
| Andhra Pradesh   | 4106                       | 4219       | 8325      | 26.51                                              | 59.06      | 36.79     | 11.82                                          | 20.31      | 15.00      |
| Bihar            | 5418                       | 1949       | 7367      | 30.65                                              | 63.34      | 35.50     | 15.60                                          | 9.38       | 13.27      |
| Gujarat          | 1611                       | 877        | 2488      | 17.59                                              | 48.08      | 22.65     | 4.64                                           | 4.22       | 4.48       |
| Haryana          | 528                        | 62         | 590       | 15.61                                              | 21.99      | 16.10     | 1.52                                           | 0.30       | 1.06       |
| Himachal Pradesh | 33                         | 7          | 40        | 3.07                                               | 1.77       | 2.72      | 0.10                                           | 0.03       | 0.07       |
| Karnataka        | 1939                       | 1716       | 3655      | 19.01                                              | 49.72      | 26.78     | 5.58                                           | 8.26       | 6.59       |
| Kerala           | 1199                       | 719        | 1918      | 23.32                                              | 43.58      | 28.24     | 3.45                                           | 3.6        | 3.46       |
| Madhya Pradesh   | 2653                       | 2295       | 4858      | 17.81                                              | 40.61      | 24.24     | 7.38                                           | 11.05      | 8.75       |
| Maharashtra      | 3150                       | 3321       | 6471      | 18.51                                              | 45.61      | 26.63     | 9.07                                           | 15.99      | 11.66      |
| Orissa           | 1639                       | 758        | 2397      | 22.64                                              | 54.26      | 27.76     | 4.72                                           | 3.65       | 4.32       |
| Punjab           | 1047                       | 45         | 1092      | 22.04                                              | 25.28      | 22.16     | 3.01                                           | 0.22       | 1.97       |
| Rajasthan        | 525                        | 240        | 765       | 5.89                                               | 15.69      | 7.33      | 1.51                                           | 1.16       | 1.38       |
| Tamilnadu        | 3179                       | 2858       | 6037      | 23.24                                              | 53.43      | 31.73     | 9.15                                           | 13.76      | 10.88      |
| Uttar Pradesh    | 4188                       | 989        | 6037      | 23.24                                              | 53.43      | 31.73     | 9.15                                           | 13.76      | 10.88      |
| West Bengal      | 3296                       | 596        | 3892      | 23.69                                              | 39.44      | 24.94     | 9.49                                           | 2.87       | 7.01       |
| India            | 34732                      | 20768      | 55500     | 19.56                                              | 46.18      | 24.94     | 100.00                                         | 100.00     | 100.00     |

[69] Source : Statistical Abstract India, 1985 (Central Statistical Organisation)

**Table No. 4**  
**PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF RURAL LABOUR HOUSEHOLDS**  
**ACCORDING TO SIZE OF LAND CULTIVATED DURING 1974 - 75.**

| Class of Household | Average cultivated land (In 0.00 acres) | % age of households according to size of cultivated land (In 0.00 acrés) |              |              |              |              |              |           |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-----------|
|                    |                                         | 0.01 to 0.49                                                             | 0.50 to 0.99 | 1.10 to 1.49 | 1.50 to 1.99 | 2.10 to 2.49 | 2.50 to 4.99 | Above 5.0 |
| Agri.Labour        |                                         |                                                                          |              |              |              |              |              |           |
| Households Total   | 1.16                                    | 40.1                                                                     | 19.9         | 15.7         | 5.3          | 7.4          | 8.4          | 3.2       |
| Scheduled Castes   | 0.88                                    | 47.01                                                                    | 20.4         | 14.7         | 4.6          | 6.2          | 5.1          | 1.9       |
| Scheduled Tribes   | 1.43                                    | 28.3                                                                     | 16.1         | 18.9         | 7.2          | 11.7         | 13.2         | 4.6       |
| Rural Households   |                                         |                                                                          |              |              |              |              |              |           |
| Total              | 1.15                                    | 40.9                                                                     | 19.3         | 15.4         | 5.1          | 7.2          | 8.5          | 3.6       |
| Scheduled Castes   | 0.91                                    | 46.9                                                                     | 19.9         | 14.8         | 4.6          | 6.1          | 5.5          | 2.2       |
| Scheduled Tribes   | 1.50                                    | 26.7                                                                     | 15.8         | 18.0         | 6.5          | 11.2         | 13.1         | 5.7       |

[71] Source : Rural Labour Inquiry 1974-1975 Summary Report. Labour Bureau, Chandigarh.

From the above table, it is clear that in 1974-75, an Agricultural Labour household owned 1.11 acres of land on an average, while the average for rural household came to 1.15 acre. It may be noted here that 60% of total rural households had very small land i.e. less than 1/2 acre. The proportion of such small landholders was greater amongst scheduled castes.

## 5. AVAILABILITY OF EMPLOYMENT

Financial position of agricultural labourers is dependent on the days of work they get. It has also some relation with the growth registered in agricultural production and the use of new technology in any part of the country. Therefore, great variation in this regard is found from State to State. In the period between 1950-51 to 1974-75, position of the total man-days of work, available to agricultural labour, was nearly static. Though some progress was achieved in the years from 1950-51 to 1964-65, the total man-days decreased from 1964-65 to 1974-75. On an average, agricultural workers could find employment for 189 days a year, in 1950-51. This average rose to 217 days in 1964-65. But thereafter declined to 193 days in 1974-75. The average for women agricultural workers was 120 days, 149 days and 138 days, correspondingly. Work opportunities in non-agricultural industries was negligible. In the period between 1950-51 to 1964-65, non-agricultural workers could obtain in non-agricultural industries, employment for 27 days a year on an average. As far as women agricultural workers were concerned, this

Table No. 5

**WORK PATTERN OF AGRICULTURAL LABOUR HOUSE - HOLDS IN**  
**ESTIMATED NUMBER OF FULL DAYS IN A YEAR 1963 - 64 AND 1974 - 75**

| Category of Households | Year    | Estimated number of full days in wage employment |                  |       |                       |       |            |       |
|------------------------|---------|--------------------------------------------------|------------------|-------|-----------------------|-------|------------|-------|
|                        |         | Agricultural                                     | Non-Agricultural | Total | Self-employed Salarie | Total | Unemployed | Total |
| Men                    | 1963-64 | 208                                              | 27               | 235   | 31                    | 272   | 48         | 75    |
|                        | 1974-75 | 185                                              | 25               | 210   | 36                    | 246   | 76         | 103   |
| Women                  | 1963-64 | 138                                              | 15               | 153   | 27                    | 183   | 96         | 153   |
|                        | 1974-75 | 129                                              | 14               | 143   | 36                    | 179   | 124        | 171   |
| Children               | 1963-64 | 167                                              | 35               | 202   | 63                    | 280   | 92         | 92    |
|                        | 1974-75 | 145                                              | 26               | 171   | 83                    | 254   | 107        | 107   |

[73] Source : All India Rural Labour Enquiry 1974-75, Summary Report, Labour Bureau Chandigarh (1978)  
 E.P.W. 25. 6.88 Page A 63

Table No. 6

FULL DAYS IN A YEAR OF WAGE PAID EMPLOYMENT IN AGRICULTURE, PER AGRICULTURAL LABOURER IN AGRICULTURAL LABOUR HOUSEHOLDS AND RURAL LABOUR HOUSEHOLDS

| States              | Agricultural Labour Households |         |         | Rural Labour Households |         |         |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|---------|---------|-------------------------|---------|---------|
|                     | 1956-57                        | 1964-65 | 1974-75 | 1964-65                 | 1974-75 | 1977-78 |
| 1                   | 2                              | 3       | 4       | 5                       | 6       | 7       |
| <b>Adult Male</b>   |                                |         |         |                         |         |         |
| All India           | 194                            | 217     | 193     | 219                     | 192     | 229     |
| Andhra Pradesh      | 211                            | 204     | 193     | 216                     | 192     | 213     |
| Bihar               | 190                            | 198     | 186     | 197                     | 185     | 265     |
| Gujarat             | 194                            | 278     | 206     | 283                     | 205     | 233     |
| Karnataka           | 198                            | 228     | 204     | 227                     | 203     | —       |
| Kerala              | 156                            | 173     | 138     | 169                     | 136     | 170     |
| Madhya Pradesh      | 215                            | 212     | 198     | 210                     | 197     | 247     |
| Maharashtra         | 222                            | 239     | 221     | 243                     | 220     | 228     |
| Orissa              | 175                            | 224     | 164     | 225                     | 162     | 218     |
| Punjab/Haryana      | 229                            | 282     | 218     | 282                     | 216     | 251     |
| Rajasthan           | 179                            | 210     | 239     | 207                     | 238     | 187     |
| Tamil Nadu          | 173                            | 194     | 148     | 195                     | 147     | 193     |
| Uttar Pradesh       | 174                            | 189     | 200     | 188                     | 199     | 213     |
| West Bengal         | 187                            | 269     | 210     | 268                     | 210     | 242     |
| <b>Adult Female</b> |                                |         |         |                         |         |         |
| All India           | 131                            | 149     | 138     | 161                     | 136     | 186     |
| Andhra Pradesh      | 140                            | 104     | 138     | 168                     | 137     | 181     |
| Bihar               | 115                            | 104     | 114     | 126                     | 115     | 206     |
| Karnataka           | 148                            | 192     | 175     | 191                     | 171     | —       |
| Gujarat             | 128★                           | 240     | 160     | 241                     | 156     | 191     |
| Kerala              | 123                            | 147     | 108     | 147                     | 105     | 158     |
| Madhya Pradesh      | 132                            | 147     | 125     | 146                     | 123     | 197     |
| Maharashtra         | 166★                           | 183     | 180     | 182                     | 178     | 185     |
| Orissa              | 70                             | 165     | 111     | 164                     | 111     | 159     |
| Punjab/Haryana      | 145                            | 173     | 150     | 170                     | 149     | 232     |
| Rajasthan           | 117                            | 153     | 163     | 151                     | 161     | 186     |
| Tamil Nadu          | 135                            | 146     | 118     | 145                     | 117     | 174     |
| Uttar Pradesh       | 96                             | 102     | 124     | 102                     | 122     | 161     |
| West Bengal         | 138                            | 216     | 147     | 206                     | 149     | 202     |

★ Refer to casual agricultural labour days only (For details of sources see Page no. 41)

Table No. 7

## MONEY WAGE RATES OF MALE AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS IN INDIAN STATES

(Rupees per day)

| Year    | Andhra | Assam | Bihar | Gujarat | Harayana | Himachal | Karnataka | Kerala | M.P. | M.R. | Orissa | Punjab | Rajasthan | T.N. | U.P.  | W.B.  |
|---------|--------|-------|-------|---------|----------|----------|-----------|--------|------|------|--------|--------|-----------|------|-------|-------|
| 1970-71 | 2.70   | 3.96  | 2.64  | 3.07    | 6.64     | 4.11     | 2.45      | 4.61   | 2.15 | 2.84 | 2.19   | 6.39   | 3.69      | 2.53 | 2.72  | 4.04  |
| 1971-72 | 2.75   | 3.82  | 2.57  | 3.40    | 6.84     | 4.80     | 2.59      | 5.05   | 2.24 | 2.96 | 2.29   | 6.64   | 3.88      | 2.69 | 2.86  | 4.29  |
| 1973-74 | 3.16   | 4.58  | 3.92  | 3.47    | 7.40     | 5.10     | 3.26      | 5.91   | 2.95 | 3.16 | 2.62   | 7.47   | 5.31      | 3.27 | 3.80  | 4.89  |
| 1974-75 | 3.73   | 5.27  | 4.13  | 3.74    | 8.58     | 5.62     | 3.42      | 6.82   | 3.38 | 3.46 | 3.02   | 8.75   | 5.61      | 4.39 | 4.20  | 5.27  |
| 1975-76 | 4.02   | 5.27  | 4.48  | 4.71    | 8.55     | 6.05     | 3.96      | 7.44   | 3.78 | 3.41 | 3.49   | 9.16   | 5.64      | 4.52 | 5.13  | 5.89  |
| 1976-77 | 4.32   | 5.46  | 5.32  | 5.85    | 8.75     | 6.02     | 4.67      | 7.61   | 4.02 | 3.41 | 4.32   | 10.01  | 7.01      | 3.97 | 5.23  | 6.55  |
| 1977-78 | 4.74   | 6.03  | 5.22  | 5.77    | 10.44    | 6.03     | 5.14      | 7.61   | 4.11 | 3.68 | 4.20   | 10.38  | 7.93      | 4.01 | 5.00  | 6.98  |
| 1978-79 | 5.01   | 6.19  | 5.08  | 6.15    | 11.17    | 6.95     | 4.97      | 7.93   | 4.21 | 4.12 | 4.33   | 10.73  | 7.58      | 4.36 | 5.33  | 7.25  |
| 1979-80 | 5.45   | 6.73  | 5.33  | 6.38    | 11.89    | 7.49     | 5.33      | 8.90   | 4.34 | 4.61 | 4.68   | 11.41  | 8.19      | 5.20 | 5.79  | 7.92  |
| 1980-81 | 6.03   | 7.30  | 5.85  | 6.75    | 12.41    | 9.56     | 5.65      | 10.71  | 4.67 | 4.68 | 4.79   | 12.23  | 9.53      | 5.95 | 6.21  | 8.09  |
| 1982-83 | 8.02   | 9.67  | 7.93  | 8.64    | 16.14    | 10.44    | 6.41      | 13.97  | 6.63 | 6.18 | 6.06   | 13.62  | 11.38     | 6.81 | 7.85  | 9.01  |
| 1983-84 | 9.28   | 11.47 | 8.92  | 10.32   | 18.15    | 11.60    | 7.18      | 15.23  | 7.86 | 8.17 | 7.49   | 15.66  | 12.35     | 7.57 | 9.61  | 10.11 |
| 1984-85 | 10.41  | 12.87 | 9.88  | 12.58   | 19.35    | 12.55    | 7.31      | 16.86  | 8.53 | 9.46 | 8.42   | 18.13  | 12.63     | 8.83 | 10.54 | 10.59 |

Source : [75] [75A] A. V. Jose E. P. W. 25.6.88 Jose

Table No. 7A

## MONEY WAGE RATES OF FEMALE AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS IN INDIAN STATES

(Rupees per day)

| Year    | Andhra | Assam | Bihar | Gujarat | Haryana | Himachal | Karnataka | Kerala | M.P. | M.R. | Orissa | Punjab | Rajasthan | T.N. | U.P. | W.B. |
|---------|--------|-------|-------|---------|---------|----------|-----------|--------|------|------|--------|--------|-----------|------|------|------|
| 1970-71 | 1.96   | 3.14  | 2.15  | 2.33    | 3.96    | 3.48     | 1.68      | 2.81   | 1.54 | 1.84 | 1.48   | 4.08   | 1.88      | 1.42 | 1.92 | 2.37 |
| 1971-72 | 1.98   | 3.12  | 2.06  | 2.61    | 4.17    | 3.60     | 1.79      | 3.50   | 1.58 | 1.83 | 1.54   | 5.41   | 1.93      | 1.52 | 1.91 | 2.84 |
| 1973-74 | 2.22   | 3.90  | 3.19  | 2.91    | 4.26    | 4.01     | 2.24      | 3.85   | 1.92 | 2.03 | 1.88   | 5.50   | 2.22      | 1.85 | 2.74 | 3.37 |
| 1974-75 | 2.69   | 4.14  | 3.50  | 3.16    | 5.02    | 4.56     | 2.57      | 2.59   | 2.41 | 2.29 | 2.26   | 6.18   | 2.85      | 2.35 | 3.10 | 3.88 |
| 1975-76 | 3.17   | 4.29  | 4.11  | 4.16    | 5.22    | 5.06     | 2.99      | 4.93   | 2.81 | 2.25 | 3.18   | 6.00   | 3.77      | 2.58 | 3.18 | 4.18 |
| 1976-77 | 3.28   | 4.72  | 4.23  | 5.54    | 6.32    | 5.06     | 3.90      | 5.19   | 3.60 | 4.41 | 4.00   | -N.R.  | 4.82      | 2.37 | 3.67 | 5.16 |
| 1977-78 | 3.58   | 5.15  | 5.19  | 5.58    | 6.68    | 5.33     | 4.45      | 5.35   | 3.67 | 2.73 | 3.84   | -N.R.  | 4.79      | 2.82 | 3.36 | 5.77 |
| 1978-79 | 3.87   | 5.19  | 4.75  | 5.83    | 6.61    | 5.53     | 4.03      | 5.84   | 3.68 | 2.98 | 3.84   | 9.39   | 5.02      | 2.89 | 3.68 | 5.50 |
| 1979-80 | 4.26   | 5.65  | 5.09  | 5.98    | 8.35    | 5.93     | 4.35      | 6.23   | 3.71 | 3.30 | 3.66   | 10.41  | 5.31      | 3.93 | 4.21 | 6.12 |
| 1980-81 | 4.54   | 6.00  | 5.25  | 6.00    | 9.62    | 7.11     | 4.26      | 7.39   | 4.02 | 3.29 | 3.84   | 11.07  | 5.22      | 3.53 | 4.36 | 6.25 |
| 1982-83 | 5.95   | 7.78  | 7.78  | 7.04    | 13.81   | 8.61     | 4.88      | 9.76   | 5.47 | 4.19 | 4.69   | 13.37  | 6.26      | 4.54 | 6.47 | 7.73 |
| 1983-84 | 6.85   | 9.36  | 8.74  | 8.81    | 14.40   | 10.06    | 5.58      | 10.51  | 6.42 | 5.56 | 5.75   | 15.84  | 7.15      | 4.75 | 7.70 | 8.60 |
| 1984-85 | 7.64   | 10.65 | 9.16  | 9.80    | 14.99   | 11.25    | 5.93      | 12.34  | 7.11 | 6.07 | 5.99   | 14.91  | 7.63      | 5.05 | 8.24 | 8.39 |

Source : (75) (75A) A.V. JOSE E.P.W. 25.6.88 Jose

Abbreviations :- M.P. - Madhya Pradesh, M.R.- Maharashtra, T.N. - Tamilnadu, U.P. - Uttar Pradesh, W.B. - West Bengal

average was only 11 days (72). The Table No 5 (73) testifies to this fact. (See page no 32 )

The availability of man-days of work in Agricultural Industry is related to the demand and supply position of such agricultural labour in a particular year. When it is a year of bad season and lesser agricultural production, demand for agricultural labour shows a downward trend. As a consequence lesser number of man-days of work are available to agricultural labour in agricultural industry.

Season was quite favourable in 1977-78 so also was food production. Agricultural labourers could, therefore, get work for more man-days.

Table No. 6 shows average number of days of employment on wages worked by agricultural labour in 1977-78 (see on page no. 33).(74)

## **6. RATE OF WAGES AND REAL WAGES**

Table Nos. 7 & 7A (on pp 34,35)(75,75A) show the rate of wages separately for men and women agricultural labour in various States in the period from 1970-71 to 1984-85.

From the said tables, it is seen that the growth in rate is practically sustained in the States of Punjab, Haryana and Kerala, over the period. The rate did not show comparable growth in Bihar, Orissa, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu. However, it should be stressed here, that these States are thickly populated and the number of agricultural labour is also quite large.

### **Why and where Wages increase?**

Normally, the States, where rate of wages has increased have shown substantial increase in agricultural production also. These two factors are closely related. However, the equation does not hold good in some of the States viz. Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar.

The growth in rate of wages may be attributed to one more reason i.e. the various rural development and employment schemes launched by Government help in accelerating the rate, e.g. employment Guarantee Scheme introduced in Maharashtra in 1972-73.

There is still another reason. Political awareness, work of Trade Unions, Laws enacted by State Government for Rural Labour and the spread of literacy in Rural areas have an impact on the rate of wages. It has been reflected in the constant growth of wage rate for agricultural labour in Kerala. The States, which periodically decide the minimum rate and take action to implement the same, witness such rise in rate of wages for agricultural labour from time to time.

The position in Punjab is quite unique. Due to green revolution in 1969 coupled with the mechanization of farming activities, the agricultural production has registered massive increase but the rate of wages has not relatively increased because labour from undeveloped States like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar etc. migrates to Punjab. In addition, labour contractors, by paying some advances to poor labour take them to Punjab, where these labourers receive from the said contractors wages just sufficient for subsistence.

Thus a new labourer-bondage system is coming in vogue. On the other hand, due to mechanization of farming processes by use of tractors etc., the need for agricultural labour decreases. Therefore, in Punjab, the rate of wages does not show comparable increase.

#### **Whether Real Wages of agricultural labour have increased?**

From the foregoing, it is seen that the rate of wages of agricultural labour has increased in Post-Independence period. However, if we want to know whether Real wages have increased or whether financial position of agricultural labour has improved, the answer would be negative.

In the years 1963-64 and 1974-75, inquiry commissions were appointed to study the problems of rural labour. The conclusions drawn in their reports clearly establish that real wages of agricultural labour have eroded by 12<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>%, but the Government reports show that there has been increase in rate of wages during these years. This growth in rate is quite illusory, if we take into account the consumer price index for agricultural labour vis-a-vis the rate of wages, the real wages have in fact declined.

In 1964-65, earnings per day of Men and Women labourers were Rs. 1.43 and Rs. 0.95 respectively. That means that these earnings, during The said period amounted to only 22% of average earnings of industrial worker. Generally, this income falls short of the one required, as per cost of living index (76). In 1964-65, agricultural labourer used to receive part of wages in the form of foodgrain. It was to the extent of 38% in respect of Men workers, while the proportion was higher in respect of women workers. Majority of landowners was in favour of payment of wages in cash. In States where landowners were able to earn more profit by reaping a good harvest by using modified seeds, they were inclined to pay wages in cash. As a result, practice of paying portion of wages in the form of foodgrain came to be gradually discontinued. Real Income of agricultural labour thus diminished (77).

National Commission on Agriculture has drawn similar conclusion in its report. Out of 11 States, in which the data was collected during the period from 1960-61 to 1969-70, in 7 States, real income of agricultural labour showed a decline. In 2 States, however, a paltry increase was noticed (78).

#### **7. PROBLEM OF INDEBTEDNESS**

Poverty increased in rural areas as there was erosion in real wages of agricultural labour, which was forced to take recourse to debt for daily subsistence. He (labourer) became more indebted. Between the period from 1964-65 to 1974-75, the percentage of indebted agricultural labour increased from 60.2 to 66.4.

The agricultural workers with landholdings, who enjoy better creditworthiness accounted for 71% of the total number of the class in 1974-75. In respect of scheduled caste agricultural workers, the percentage was 70.8 in the said year (Rural Labour Inquiry Report 1974-75) (84). The situation further deteriorated in 1977-78 (85). In Punjab and Haryana, which have fertile and rich soil, the agricultural labour class is just below the poverty line. It has not so far been able to cross the said line.

Debt incurred by agricultural labour is utilised mainly for consumption. In between 1964-65 and 1974-75, this consumption debt decreased from 77.6% to 67%. During the same period debt for productive processes rose by 1% from 11.9% to 12.7% (Rural Labour Inquiry Report 1974-75).

Agricultural Labour used to raise loan from traditional money-lenders. This type of debt rose from 30.6% to 49.9% during the aforesaid period. Raising loan from relations and friends was the third source. Percentage of this type of debt to total debt was 26.5. Loan granted by co-operative institutions was to the extent of 5.3% (Rural Labour Inquiry 1974-75).

Thus, it becomes clear that the standard of living of agricultural labour occupying the lowest rung of rural social structure has not improved but the number of such workers is on increase.

### **Education**

The low standard of living, naturally, has its impact on the level of education of agricultural labour. 80% of agricultural labourers were illiterate in 1974-75, as per the above Rural Labour Inquiry Report.

### **Legislation**

Numerous laws, relating to Industrial Labour in India have been enacted. However, except The Minimum Wages Act 1948, no comprehensive central law relating to unorganised agricultural labour has been enacted. In the absence of any such legislation, agricultural labour is denied protection regarding the number of working hours, rest, job security, social justice etc.

Even the provisions of The Minimum Wages Act, in force, remain only on paper because the collusion between administrative machinery and the employers and the want of political will to implement it. Thus the Act is not properly implemented. National commission on Agricultural Labour 1976 has also expressed this view.

### **(C) The System of Bonded Labour**

This inhuman system is the product of varied social, economic and complicated political issues. Rural Social Structure, customs and tradition, illiteracy, atrocities committed by rich and influential class, indebtedness and debilitated rural economic system are the main reasons because of which this inhuman practice came into existence. It is the most horrible system of exploiting weaker sections in rural area. In post-independence period also, the system is in vogue to some extent. What is the definition of the Bonded Labour? who is to be pinpointed as Bonded Labour? A.K. Lal has given a heart-rendering and purposeful analysis of the problem.

#### **Definition of Bonded Labour**

"Bonded Labour has no freedom to choose the place of employment. He is born as 'Das' (slave), lives as 'Das' and dies as 'Das'. He does not get any opportunity for his uplift. He is prohibited from acquiring art or skill for obtaining alternative employment." (79)

#### **Background of legislations to abolish system of Bonded Labour**

In view of the gravity of this problem, Article 23(1) was incorporated in Indian

Constitution. System was prohibited and as per Section 374 of Indian Penal Code, it is an offence to employ bonded labour. Despite the Constitutional and legislative provisions, the system continued to exist in Independent India and even after 43 years of Independence, it is in existence, though on a small scale.

After the proclamation of emergency in 1975, Central Govt., by an ordinance, abolished this system of Bonded Labour. A Law was subsequently enacted by Parliament on 9.2.1976, replacing the ordinance.

Thereafter in 1976 various States embarked on certain schemes of rehabilitation of bonded labourers, after indentifying them, but the system did not totally disappear.

### **Span of Bonded Labour Problems in India**

A National survey was conducted in 1978 by Gandhi Peace Foundation and National Labour Institute, New Delhi. In their interim report published in 1978, it has been mentioned that in 8 States only, where survey was carried out, the number of bonded labour was 21.7 lakhs. The details are as follows.

**Table No. 8**

| State          | Number of bonded Labour | % of bonded labour to total agricultural labour in the State |
|----------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| Andhra Pradesh | 3,25,000                | 4.96                                                         |
| Bihar          | 1,11,000                | 1.70                                                         |
| Gujarat        | 1,71,000                | 9.5                                                          |
| Karnataka      | 1,93,000                | 7.6                                                          |
| Madhya Pradesh | 5,00,000                | 11.8                                                         |
| Rajasthan      | 67,000                  | 9.4                                                          |
| Tamilnadu      | 2,50,000                | 6.0                                                          |
| Uttar Pradesh  | 5,50,000                | 10.5                                                         |

[75B] Source : National Sample Survey on the incidence of Bonded Labour, Gandhi Peace Foundation, New Delhi.

Final report was published in 1981 (80). As a matter of fact this number is not indicative of real position. The total number of bonded labour in India far exceeded this figure. In 1981, even in the so called progressive State of Kerala the system was in existence in Waynad District. Strangely enough the landlords who engaged such bonded labour were strong supporters of the communist party government in power. No wonder, law was rendered helpless to mitigate miseries of bonded labour.

### **1. CAUSES AND EXTENT**

In this survey on incidence of bonded labour, certain causes have been cited (81). It is estimated that 75% of bonded labourers fall prey to the system, due to their indebtedness. In respect of 11% of labourers, the reason was either they belonged to backward (scheduled) communities, or were victims of old customs and traditions, branding them as 'Dasas'. Dire poverty and lack of social awareness were the main contributing factors in building up this system. Out of the total bonded labourers' 86.6%

belonged to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. 85% of the debt incurred by these people was spent for family maintenance, marriages, payment of dowry etc. This was one of the major causes for sustenance of this system of bonded labour. Agreement for repayment of such debt differed according to local conditions. In many instances, bonded labour was to go free only on total repayment of debt. In some cases, bonded labour used to receive insufficient food and clothing. They did not receive any wages for their work. Therefore, they had to lean on other members of the family for repayment of debt. Under these circumstances, they were forced to work as bonded labour throughout their life. In some instances, the practice was continued from generation to generation.

The poorest of agricultural labourers, worked as bonded labour on account of their indebtedness. According to a social survey, 80% of the people, whose family income was less than Rs. 750/- per annum were working as bonded labour, due to their indebtedness. But this percentage was only 46 in relation to workers whose yearly family income was between Rs. 1,500/- to Rs. 2,000/- (82).

## **2. EFFORTS TO ABOLISH THE SYSTEM**

Bandhua Liberation Front is struggling for liberation of bonded labour. Swami Agnivesh and the Secretary of the Front, Kailas Satyarthi are toiling hard to build up a cadre of activists, by reaching the lowest of the lowest. They have observed that according to the information available from Planning Commission and other reliable sources, out of the total of 5.5 crore children, between ages 14 to 16 years working in industries, at least 1 crore are working as bonded labour. In the opinion of Shri Kailas, children work in large number in mines and quarries. Due to unholy alliance and conspiracy of Government officials, Police and Contractors, the system tends to get firmly rooted, instead of being abolished.

For national development in all spheres, the system of 'Bonded Labour' in India, should be totally and permanently abolished. (83)

In the process of social and national reconstruction so far as it relates to bonded agricultural labour, it is necessary to presuppose and accept certain basic principles. The task cannot be achieved piece-meal or in isolation. National prosperity and progress, in totality and in all spheres, will have to be kept in mind. The deformities which have crept in and stabilized in our Social Systems and are gaining respectability and protection at the hands of concerned beneficiaries, will have to be removed.

It will not be befitting simply to be compassionate and charitable to the downtrodden masses, who are always exposed to strained relations, based on exploitation that have shot up between various social classes. Gandhiji felt that the poorest of the poor person forms the weakest link of the social chain. If this link is not strengthened, the chain will break away. Therefore, when we are thinking of rural development, this particular constituent of society and for that matter the whole rural society warrants our greater attention.

The system of bonded labour, prevalent in various parts of India is the weakest link in the degenerated social chain. There should not be two opinions about abolishing this unhealthy and repressive system, in the interest of total national development. But for achieving this, mobilisation of Public opinion and creation of greater awareness, will have to be launched.

As we have seen above, with the increase in the number of agricultural labour, the socio-economic conditions of this class further deteriorated. Some efforts made by Kautilya to ameliorate their conditions were not sustained or continued during the tyrannical rule of Mugal Emperors or self interested regime of Britishers. The root cause of the miseries suffered, through the centuries, by the agricultural labour was that, he was never allowed to enjoy the fruits of his toil. Sustained efforts were never made to give him sufficient land, by cultivating which he could maintain himself and his family with self respect and dignity. However, with the advent of the independence he was hoping to become the owner of the land which he tilled as a labour only. What were the attempts made, which schemes were formulated and how far those were successful in fulfilling such legitimate hopes and aspirations of agricultural labour is to be viewed in the next Chapter on Land Reforms.

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(From Page no. 33)

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## Chapter II

### LAND REFORMS

#### (A) Land to the tiller

To motivate people to participate in freedom movement in pre-Independence days, the political leaders gave many assurances to the people and announced various new reforms that would be brought about. One of them was 'Land to the Tiller'. This slogan was aimed at big landlords, as in the said period, Zamindars, Jagagirdars and Princes were the arch supporters of British Rule.

Rationale behind this was, to strike down the Landlord-Tenant relationship and to wipe out the class of idle landholders, enabling peasant tilling the land to become owner of that agricultural land. It was also thought that there could not be national economic progress unless agricultural production system which was in the clutches of feudal landlords since mediaeval times was freed. It was also necessary to water down strained social relations and strifes in various rural communities, even if these could not be totally eradicated at once. For achieving this, the downtrodden people in rural society would have to be extended protection in relation to productive agricultural lands. Land Reforms, therefore, were given prime consideration in plans for national reconstruction. From the point of view of integrated rural development, it was also necessary to have proper assessment of the prevalent rural social structure, social relationship between different communities, ratio of land and populace etc. Such an analysis would help in formulating proper perspective for rural development. In this context, Land Reforms, occupy a place of prime importance.

#### 1. CONCEPT OF LAND REFORMS

It is universally agreed that multi-layer system of different interests in agriculture industry, co-relationship between its various constituents should undergo a radical change, if at all, progress is to be achieved. This change is of two types, one is indirect on account of various social and economic actions and reactions. Such effort is quite spontaneous, logical and indirect. Use of modern technology has brought about noticeable change in rural agrarian relations and this can be cited as an illustration of this first type.

Second type envisages changes intentionally and directly introduced in rural agrarian economic system. Laws relating to land enacted by Government, the implementation of such laws, and subsequent assistance rendered by Government are some of the processes through which such direct change is brought about. Social and collective struggles also contribute towards bringing about such change in agrarian relations.

'Land Reforms' may be defined as an act of direct intervention by adopting various

measures at all levels for bringing about change in agrarian relations (1). Land Reforms in the Indian context means removal of intermediaries, regulation of tenancy and redistribution of land to landless and semi - landless agricultural labourers. (1A).

After Independence, four types of measures were initiated for bringing about change in ownership of land and the size of holdings. The general nature of these major experiments was as follows.

- (a) Land reforms introduced from the top :- These include various Laws relating to land enacted by Government. State Government enacts and implements such laws as per the guidelines spelt out by Central Government. As per provisions in Indian Constitution, 'Land Reforms' is a subject in State List. Therefore, State Governments have to enact laws, as per the guide lines given by the Central Government
- (b) Social reforms brought about by the pressure exerted by the people at the rock bottom level e.g. changes in ownership of land brought about by struggles for land in Telangana as well as by Naxal movement in 1946 and 1967 respectively.
- (c) The movements and agitations of the poor and landless agricultural labour and the tribals backed by the protection extended by Government, have brought about such change. The illustrations of this type are Land Grab movement launched over a short period in West Bengal when Joint Front Government was in power, struggle launched in 1984 in Buldhana Dist. (Maharashtra) and by tribals for ownership of land in Jalgaon- Sangrampur Taluks under the leadership of 'Vidarbha Krishi Adivasi Mazdoor Sangh', affiliated to Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh. (2)
- (d) Persuading landlords to change their obstinate stand by exerting pressure in peaceful manner, 'Bhoodani' and 'Gramdan' movements launched by Vinoba Bhave are examples of this fourth type. The objectives of these movements were that the owners who were having land in excess of their needs, should donate such land of their own free will and then such land be equitably distributed amongst landless agricultural labourers.

## 2. OBJECTIVES OF LAND REFORMS

It is obvious that policies and programmes relating to land play a prominent role in the economic system of the nation; since India is predominantly an agricultural country Process to enact laws for introducing land reforms and to implement such laws effectively started after Independence in 1947. For planned progress, five year plans were formulated.

The objectives and policies of Land Refoms, as laid down by the Planners were as follows :

One of the objectives was to remove the obstacles, in the process of modernization of agriculture, created by the traditional rural agrarian structure and by the mental attitude of rural people.

Another objective was to reduce the disparity in rural social structure and the agricultural economic system. This disparity is the product of uneven rights (to land) of

landholders. Therefore, changes in the system of landholdings have to be brought about.

Government proceeded to achieve the above objectives through following measures.

- (a) To abolish the system of Zamindari, Jahagirdari, Talukdari, Malgujari etc. In the prevalent system (agricultural), which was not only abating the exploitation but also was hindering the progress. These institutions worked as intermediaries between Government and the actual tiller of the land.
- (b) To introduce progressive modifications in tenancy legislation, with a view to extend protection to tenants. To reduce the land rent payable to landlords and to secure for the tenants rights of ownership to the land, cultivated by them.
- (c) To impose restrictions on the size of holdings of landlords of cultivable land by enacting laws regarding Land Ceiling etc.
- (d) To update Land Record, so that tenants could obtain legal documents about their rights for cultivation of land and ownership of land, tilled by them.
- (e) To bring about consolidation of small landholdings, so that tenants could conveniently benefitted by modern agricultural technology, which enables them to make economic use of resources for ensuring increased production.

It would be worthwhile to take a review of the progress made during the last four decades by taking recourse to above measures, of the impediments in their implementation and reasons thereof, and its overall effect on the socio-economic rural structure.

### 3. ABOLITION OF INTERMEDIARIES

Jahagirdars and Inamdars were sort of intermediaries between Government and the actual tillers of land. This was in a way parasite class, burdening the society. There was no active participation on their part, in agricultural production and the actual tillers of land had no ownership right. This position gave rise to internal contradictions between these two classes, viz. peasants engaged in cultivation and the class of Jahagirdars etc. It was quite necessary to abolish this system of intermediaries to reduce socio-economic disparity. These objectives and the need for enacting laws in this behalf was the rationale behind such legislation. Jahagirdars and Inamdars were owners of 40% land in 1950, when the law abolishing the system of Jahagirdari, Inamdari was enacted. This system is no more in existence. About two crore peasants, who were victims of this system have now become the owners of land.

Though this legislation has been passed, it does not follow that the strong hold of these big Zamindars as to the monopoly of ownership of land, has vanished. On the plea that they are actually tilling (cultivating) land, these big Zamindars could still keep with them large chunks of land.

On this account, they were able to retain ownership over the land, evicting the tenants. Though the title of this act outwardly gives an impression that the object of the act was to do away with intermediaries, in reality it was not so. It was an attempt in disguise to retain their domination by virtue of ownership of land. Zamindars and Jahagirdars had to resort to one thing i.e. of adopting certain changes in the style

preserving their predominance. By this ruse they were in a position to retain their ownership of land, on a large scale. Instead of cultivating the land through tenants (in which process they were not directly associated with agricultural work), they had only to get the land cultivated by employing labour on wages in the changed circumstances, so that they could continue to retain their dominant position, claiming ownership to large pieces of land. As per one of the provisions of the Act, they were legally eligible to resume land, for personal cultivation, from tenants. Definition of 'Personal Cultivation', as embodied in the Act, was as follows :

- (a) To cultivate land personally or with the labour of family members.
- (b) To cultivate land by employing labour on wages (to be paid either in cash or in the form of foodgrain). However, such cultivation did not imply labour having partnership rights in the produce
- (c) To cultivate land by employing casual labour under his own or family members' supervision.

Under the pretext of self-cultivation, landlords were able to retain their ownership rights on large landholdings. Another important provision made in the Act was relating to compensation payable to landlords for land acquired by Government. The compensation proposed was on a liberal scale. According to an estimate of the Reserve Bank of India, total compensation payable under the Act would have amounted to Rs. 670 crores. Till the end of 1975, a sum of Rs. 360 crores was disbursed (3).

How pathetic was the implementation of the Act could be seen from the most deplorable conditions in Bihar. In one of the studies it has been revealed that Zamindari, though abolished by Law, was still existent in the whole State in unlawful manner. Rulers of former princely States like Ramgarh, Darbhanga etc. were extorting huge amounts from tenants by way of royalties, share in production, illegal taxes etc. They were entitled to own various types of lands, as per provisions of Bihar Zamindari Abolition Act of 1950.

They retained their hold on agricultural land on a very large scale by predating the transfer deeds prior to 1.1.1946. They executed benami transfer deeds not only in favour of servants, unborn children but also in favour of cows, horses, dogs etc. Similarly large chunk of land was shown as rocky or sandy terrain thus not suitable for cultivation. (5)

The main thrust of Zamindari Abolition Act was towards discontinuance of the practice of cultivation of land by tenants. It was not directed towards reducing the wide socio-economic disparity or the dominance of landlords, on rural populace, due to their ownership of large lands. As a result, for whatever surplus land was acquired by the Government from landlords, excessive compensation was paid. Zamindars started investing larger funds in agriculture, giving rise to capitalism and mechanization in agriculture. Tenants in large number were evicted from lands rendering them landless. The stream of these landless tenants naturally swelled the class of existing agricultural labour. Number of landless agricultural labour showed a marked increase. (4)

#### **(B) Tenancy Laws**

It was the practice to get the land cultivated through tenants or subtenants, where

the system of Zamindari - Inamdari or Rayatwari was prevalent. Large portion of cultivable land was thus tilled by such tenants/sub-tenants. For changing this practice, it became necessary to enact suitable amendments in Tenancy Laws. National policy to ensure uniformity and unity of objectives throughout the country was formulated. It provided :

- (a) To bestow ownership right on tenant for land, cultivated by him.
- (b) Tenants not eligible to get such ownership rights, to be given protection for continuance of their cultivation of lands.
- (c) Land Rent payable was to be 1/4th or 1/5th of the total production.

The policy relating to above points was to be uniform throughout the country.

Following recommendations were made in the first Five Year Plan for modification of tenancy laws.

- (i) To give ownership rights to tenants. However, landlords were to have right of resumption to some extent for getting back the land for self-cultivation from tenants.
- (ii) This right of resumption would be restricted to the aggregate of 3 family holdings. Adult members of a family could get such land cultivated by employing labour.
- (iii) Agriculturists who are themselves cultivating land would only be empowered to take back land from tenants.
- (iv) This 'Right of Resumption' had to be exercised by owners of land within a period of 5 years.
- (v) Land which could not be taken by landlords or for which right of resumption had not been duly exercised within 5 years, could be purchased by instalments on payment of an amount in specified multiples of land rent, by such tenants who were cultivating land. Government was to give due assistance to such tenants.

If we take a review of the implementation of various provisions of Tenancy Laws over a period of last 35-40 years, it can be seen that much progress has been made. However, there are numerous provisions in laws, which defeat the purpose and renders it obsolete. To ensure social justice and to bring about increase in agricultural production by extending security and ownership rights to tenants, which were the main objectives of laws, have in reality not been achieved to the desired extent.

The class of 'Bataidar' (Share Cropper) has been excluded from definition of 'Tenant' in these laws. The number of Bataidars in the country has been and still is quite large. This large class is quite vulnerable to injustice in rural areas. There are various provisions in laws which deprive the tenants of their right to cultivate land, for various reasons.

The prominent grounds on which tenants could be deprived of their privilege to cultivate land are as under:

- (a) Non-payment of rent.
- (b) Non-payment of rent, within specified time limit.
- (c) Non-payment of share in production within prescribed time limit.
- (d) Allotment of land to subtenant for cultivation without knowledge of landlord

or to transfer land illegally.

- (e) Unauthorised use of land.
- (f) Allow land to remain fallow continuously for two years.
- (g) Not cultivating land either personally or prudently.

Third important factor is the provision of allowing tenant to terminate his tenancy of his own free will. This provision has endowed landlords with an effective tool to evict tenants. Landlords also got right of resumption on getting tenancies terminated under certain circumstances. The above mentioned provisions and other impediments have so far not allowed fruitful and meaningful implementation of laws. More details on this point are available in the works of P. C. Joshi and Daniel Thorner (6).

Let us now consider the All India Dimensions of Tenancy up to 1982. The position in this respect is shown on Table No. 9 (page no.52)

At an all-India level there were 17.4 million rural households reporting leasing in Table No. 9. These formed 18.55 percent of total rural households which were estimated at 93.9 millions as in 1982. The distribution of households column showed large concentration in the landless, marginal and small owner column. These groups accounted for 91.55 percent of the total tenants in rural India.

In brief, among those who leased-in, the bulk are landless and marginal owners. This picture does not change even if we consider those who lease-out among the small. The landless and marginal owners seek improved access to land.

## 1. LEASED-IN AND LEASED OUT AREA

Out of total estimated owned area of 119.8 million hectares, 8.9 million hectares are reported leased-in. (Table- 10). In terms of area, one half of total area leased-in is accounted for by the landless and the marginal and another 20 percent by the small owner group. Thus the bulk of the leased-in area as in the case of households, is accounted for by the marginal and small owners. (See Table no.10, on Page no 53) (46).

It may be helpful to assess the extent of security to cultivate land and the extent to which ownership rights were made available to tenants. Time bound programme has been chalked out for implementation of Tenancy Laws during the 6th Plan period (1980-85).

Process for vesting ownership rights in tenants was to be completed upto 1981-82. Official quarters have now graciously conceded that this process was not complete even in 1986. In almost all States tenants have been assured of their right to cultivate land. National policy has laid down that the rent payable by tenant to landlord should generally be to the extent of 1/5th or 1/4th of total (production) income. All States had enacted laws relating to Rent, prior to commencement of 3rd Five Year Plan. In Gujarat, Maharashtra and Rajasthan, the rent payable was restricted to maximum 1/6th of the total income. In Assam, Kerala, Orissa and certain centrally administered areas, this rent was upto 1/4th or less. Three levels had been prescribed in Tamilnadu. Rent for land under irrigation was to the extent of 40%, for land under lift irrigation this

Table No. 9

**DISTRIBUTION OF ESTIMATED RURAL HOUSEHOLDS BY OWNERSHIP,  
LEASED-IN AND LEASED-OUT: ALL INDIA (IN HUNDREDS): 1982**

| Ownership<br>Category (h)     | Total Owner<br>Households | Leasing-in<br>Households | Leasing-out<br>Households | Percentage in Total |               |               |               |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
|                               |                           |                          |                           | By Ownership        | Leasing-in    | Leasing-out   | Not Leased-in |
| 1. Landless                   | 10,637.1                  | 6,113.4                  | 123                       | 11.33 <sup>a</sup>  | 30.52         | 0.24          | 40.92         |
| 2. Marginal<br>(0.002-1.00)   | 51,915.7                  | 10,266.6<br>(4.01)       | 2,558.9                   | 55.31               | 51.25         | 49.94         | 51.69         |
| 3. Small<br>(1.01-2.02)       | 13,794.6                  | 1,958.8<br>(1.77)        | 1,104.9                   | 14.70               | 9.78          | 21.56         | 5.73          |
| 4. Semi-medium<br>(2.03-4.04) | 10,118.5                  | 1,136.0<br>(1.19)        | 957.1                     | 10.78               | 5.67          | 18.68         | 1.20          |
| 5. Medium<br>(4.05-10.12)     | 6,050.6                   | 497.2<br>(1.33)          | 373.0                     | 6.45                | 2.48          | 7.23          | 0.83          |
| 6. Large<br>(10.13 and above) | 1,338.3                   | 61.8<br>(0.52)           | —                         | 1.43                | 0.31          | 2.29          | -0.38         |
| <b>Total</b>                  | <b>93,854.8</b>           | <b>17,391.3</b>          | <b>5,190.2</b>            | <b>100.00</b>       | <b>100.00</b> | <b>100.00</b> | <b>100.00</b> |

4A Source : E.P.W. March 30, 1991

**Table No. 10**  
**ESTIMATED AREA OWNED, LEASED-IN AND LEASED-OUT BY SIZE GROUP: ALL INDIA 1982**

| Size Group                     | Owned Area | Leased-in Area (in00h) | Leased-out Area | Percentage to Total |           |            |
|--------------------------------|------------|------------------------|-----------------|---------------------|-----------|------------|
|                                |            |                        |                 | Owmed               | Leased-in | Leased-out |
| 1. Marginal including landless | 14,632,6   | 4,115,7<br>(5.89)      | 698,3           | 12.22               | 50.25     | 13.85      |
| 2. Small                       | 19,753,2   | 1,600,0<br>(1.79)      | 902,7           | 16.49               | 19.54     | 17.91      |
| 3. Semi-medium                 | 28,004,8   | 1,228,1<br>(0.91)      | 1,355,3         | 23.38               | 15.00     | 26.89      |
| 4. Medium                      | 35,734,9   | 997,1<br>(0.78)        | 1,280.9         | 29.84               | 12.17     | 25.41      |
| 5. Large                       | 21,639,9   | 248,9<br>(0.31)        | 802,5           | 18.07               | 3.94      | 15.92      |
| Total                          | 119,765,4  | 8,934.5                | 5,125,9         | 100.00              | 100.00    | 100.00     |

Note : Figures in brackets are ratios-of leased in to leased-out area within the group.

Source : E.P.W. March 30, 1991

proportion was 35% while in respect of other lands, it was 33.3%. In Andhra, Haryana and Punjab the proportion of rent payable was more than laid down by national policy. In other States also, the position was likewise according to authorities but in reality, tenants used to pay higher rent on account of their ignorance of legal provisions or socio-economic debility.

In Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Haryana, Punjab and Tamilnadu tenants have not been given ownership rights even now. In West Bengal 13.37 lakh Bataidars got these rights in 1986 (7). It is also seen that due to struggle launched by Bataidars in West Bengal (Operation Barga) Revenue Department has registered about 10 lakhs 13 thousand Bataidars. But similar measures have not been visible in Bihar and Tamilnadu. Bihar Government attempted to prepare register of tenants in 1963 but had to abandon the task on account of armed resistance put up by landlords. Unless tenants are registered in Government records, they do not get either security for land cultivation or ownership rights. Moreover, no crop loans are made available to them by credit institutions. Implementation of tenancy laws is not uniform all over the country. It is rigid or lukewarm i.e. varies from State to State. In parts where system of Zamindari or Inamdari is prominent, the influence of landlords is comparatively more than the parts where Rayatdari System is in vogue. Political and social pressure is exerted by such Zamindars over officialdom. Implementation of laws is therefore as per their wishes and in their favour. Absentee Landlord naturally does not wield that much power compared to that of landlord who stays in village, where he owns land. In Konkan region of Maharashtra tenants could get ownership rights quite early due to greater percentage of absentee landlords, whereas there were many obstacles in implementation of laws in rest of Maharashtra on account of greater influence of landlords (7 A).

## 2. INEFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION

Amongst many reasons for meagre increase in rice production in Eastern Parts of the country, the prominent one is that there are large numbers of Bataidars in this region and they are unable to obtain fertilizers or cash credit. Landlords are not willing to invest capital in agricultural land under Bataidari System even well water is not available (8). In States, where tenancy system came to be abolished, system of Bataidari sprang up. Oral agreements are reached in this connection and in government records, entries are made to show that such holdings are being cultivated by landlords themselves. (9).

"Informal" or oral tenancy is a euphemism for landlord-tenant relationship remaining entirely out of reach of tenancy legislation for security, fair rents and transfer of land to actual tillers. Its growing extent is a revealing symptom of how an adverse socio-economic context could frustrate reformist measures. (9A)

Greater concessions have been given to landlords for cultivation of land through tenants, by law in certain States, though national policy intends to restrict such facility for landlords coming under special categories (Disabled etc.) (e.g. in Orissa, Shree Jagannath Temple, Co-operative Institutions, Public Shrines and Charitable Institutions

have been given concessions to get the land cultivated through tenants.

The prime objective of Tenancy Laws was to give tenants, the right of ownership to land. However, in many a states, compensation decided to be payable by law was quite exorbitant. Being unable to pay such large compensation, tenants were deprived of their right to get ownership of land. Numerous tenants exposed to abject poverty, executed documents under the coercion of landlords, relinquishing their rights of their own free will. Likewise many tenants were stripped off this right, as there were no relevant records of their tenancies with Government and landlords had already taken steps to get the entries registered in their favour by using their socio-economic influence. There are various types of tenancies. Majority of tenants is either poor or middle class agriculturists.

There is another class of tenants, who are rich agriculturists and who own land. In addition to their own, they cultivate land of others as tenants. These wealthy tenants defeated the move of landlords of depriving them of tenancy rights and in this process, they became owners of additional land and richer and wealthier. Since laws failed to take cognizance of this eventuality, overall effect was that poor tenants lost the land and right of ownership and turned into agricultural labour while rich tenants got ownership of additional land. Subsequently modifications were inserted in laws to ensure that tenants be entitled to have minimum landholding. But by that time, landlords had already taken away land from majority of poor tenants.

An attempt is made in the above discussion to give an idea about various provisions of tenancy laws and the current position as regards their implementation. Against such a backdrop of observed trend in the magnitude and changing character of tenancy it will be useful to examine the extent to which access to land through reliance on the lease market continue to be relevant to the landless and marginal farmers in particular. It will also be useful and interesting to examine the significance of an effective tenancy reform in poverty alleviation programme.

It will be seen that decline in tenancy reduced the overall access to land of marginal owners and landless. Despite some trends of reverse leasing, which were seen in commercialized areas even in the pre-technology period, the basic aspect of tenancy continues to be subsistence tenancy. Further, the bulk of small tenancy is concentrated in the States with relatively high incidence of poverty in these areas. Renting out by the small owners is not only insignificant but over a period shows signs of decline suggesting the continued importance of access to land for landless and marginal owners. Moreover, in areas with high concentration of tenancy, share cropping is not only significant but is on the rise. Therefore, an effectively implemented tenancy legislation has not only the potential for poverty alleviation, but could contribute to their prosperity.

A rough estimate of the possible benefits of improved access to land through tenancy reform shows that one-fourth of the marginal owners including the landless could benefit. To bring about improvement in this situation and to achieve the basic objectives, recourse will have to be taken to following measures.

(a) As a matter of fact, record showing tenants to whom ownership of land can be

transferred by law, be compiled. This should include names of tenants, forcibly driven away as well as of those who have relinquished their right as per their alleged free will, under coercion of landlords.

- (b) To collect data and evidence relating to tenancies. In many transactions, agreement is generally oral. That is a secret tenancy system. No entries are made in respect thereof in records. De-novo in depth inquiry has to be instituted in such cases by constituting Inquiry Commissions once again and launching a time-bound programme to decide such cases.
- (c) Those tenants who are staying in huts constructed in fields, being cultivated by them, should be given right of ownership to that portion of land. They are in a position to give just, substantial and true evidence.

But in the absence of their strong union (association) at village level, tenants may not come forward out of fear, to give evidence and to establish their right when fresh inquiry is being conducted. All tenants could be registered and given justice only with the maximum joint efforts of 'De-novo Inquiry' and 'Strong rural labour unions'.

### (C) Land Ceiling Acts

'Land Ceiling Act' is another milestone in the legal process of 'Land Reforms'. Almost all economists have conceded that this law is inseparable and inevitable integral factor in the 'National Economic Development Programme'. There is universal unanimity and acceptability of this position. Many economists opine that any land reform programme will be futile if there is no limit on maximum landholdings and if there be no distribution of surplus land amongst landless agricultural labour.

Matter relating to limitation of maximum landholding is under debate since long. The matter has been referred to in Policy Paper on Land submitted by Dr. Radha Kamal Mukherjee in 1939 to National Planning Committee. He has stated therein as under :-

"Maximum size of landholding which an agriculturist should have for cultivation be decided. If he is to receive any loan or concession in land revenue from Government, his ownership of landholdings should be limited to the maximum, as laid down by law. Size of landholding be such, that in normal conditions, agriculturist will not be required to employ labour (10).

In post Independence period, starting right from first Five Year Plan, in all subsequent plans, Land Reforms and Land Ceiling Laws have received constant attention and emphatic advocacy. Land Reform Laws are a must for the following reasons.

- (a) Increase in agricultural production.
- (b) Creation of more job opportunities in agricultural industry

Above two objectives of Land Reforms are basic and of utmost importance. Ironically, it is surprising that in the period of 15 years after Independence, planners have not given due attention to Land Reform Laws and its progress has been at snail's pace. In the 1st Three Five Year Plans, matter relating to land reforms was considered only in the context of social justice and equality. Basic objectives viz. increase in

agricultural production and creation of more job opportunities, more or less remained neglected. More stress was laid on the fallacious premise that mechanisation of agriculture would automatically result in increase in production. Futility of this thinking has been proved by many studies undertaken later on. It has now been unequivocally established that production and job opportunities increase, when cultivation is restricted to small landholdings. In the draft of Five Year plan covering period from 1978-83, it has been clearly pointed out,

“Redistribution of land will help increase in employment opportunities because in agricultural holdings of small scale more labour (per hectare) is employed in purposeful and methodical manner, than in the case of large scale cultivation”

Therefore there is no possibility of downfall in production. If cash credit, fertilizers etc. are made available on the same scale, a small holding gives more production as compared to large holding (11).

Land Ceiling Laws were enacted and implemented in two phases. First phase covers the period from 1950-60 to 1972, when certain Laws were enacted before finalization of guiding principles in 1972. Thereafter in the second phase, some more laws were enacted. These statutory provisions suffered from many loopholes and big landlords took full advantage of the same. Besides, implementation of these laws was unsatisfactory. Anticipating such land ceiling legislation, number of big landlords, effected benami transfers of land. As a result, meagre surplus land was available for redistribution amongst poor agriculturists. Relevant figures are given elsewhere. Prominent drawbacks in the laws and their implementation during the first phase are mentioned below.

- (i) Maximum limit of landholding was fixed generally at a rather high level, not warranting any noticeable dislodgement of monopoly rights of big landlords to large agricultural landholdings.
- (ii) Ample scope was provided for fictitious transfers by executing benami transactions and getting them duly recorded, enabling landlords to escape from the clutches of these Laws.
- (iii) Under various circumstances, exemptions could be obtained from the provisions of laws. This enabled the officials from local village to District levels to wield unfettered authority. Central Land Reforms Committee submitted certain recommendations in 1972, after reviewing the legislations enacted till then. Based on the same, National guiding principles were once again formulated with a view that subsequent laws would adhere to the said principles. Salient features of the said recommendations are as under :-
  - (a) Maximum limit for holding should be between 10 to 18 acres, where land is under permanent irrigation and where crops are harvested twice a year. In respect of land, where irrigation facility for one crop only is guaranteed, the holding limit should not exceed 27 acres, and in respect of ordinary land, holding should be restricted to maximum 54 acres.
  - (b) Family of a person constitutes a 'unit' for the purpose of this Act. Family would

- consist of self, wife and minor children. Major son would be treated as an 'Independent Unit', while implementing provisions of this Act.
- (c) Certain exceptions should be made or concessions be given, in respect of Tea, Coffee and Rubber plantations. Land used for non-agricultural purposes like merchandise, industry etc. should be exempted from the provisions of this Act. Sugar-cane plantations should not be given any exemption. However, sugar factories may be permitted to retain ownership of land to the extent of 100 acres.
  - (d) Compensation payable for surplus land should be decided at substantially lower rate, than the then prevalent market rate for such land. Preferably such compensation should be based on land revenue payable. It may be equal to certain times of such revenue (say 10 times).
  - (e) Priority should be allotted to landless agricultural labour and especially to scheduled castes and tribes while distributing surplus land.
  - (f) All laws, duly modified, should be enacted before 31.12.1972 and those should be included in 9th schedule of the Constitution.
  - (g) Implementation of these laws, would rest with State Governments. However, if there be any deviation from the guiding principles, in the laws, prior consent of Central Government would have to be obtained.

During the 2nd Five Year Plan period, land ceiling Acts were passed in 11 States and Union Territories. In Bihar, Madras and Mysore, these laws were enacted during 3rd Five Year Plan period. Such laws do not find a place in Meghalaya, Nagaland, Andaman-Nicobar Islands, Arunachal Pradesh, Goa-Diu and Daman and Mizoram (12). In Sikkim, Law has been enacted but there is no implementation thereof.

#### 1. LIMITS OF LAND HOLDINGS

Maximum limit of landholding, as laid down by Land Ceiling Acts in various States is shown in the following Table

**Table No. 11**  
**LAND CEILING LIMITS IN THE STATES**

| States           | Proportion | Irrigated                | Non-Irrigated                     |
|------------------|------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Andhra Pradesh   | Acre       | 10.27                    | 35.54                             |
| Assam            | Acre       | 16 <sup>2</sup>          | 16 <sup>2</sup>                   |
| Bihar            | Acre       | 15-25                    | 30-40                             |
| Gujarat          | Acre       | 10-27                    | 20-54                             |
| Haryana          | Hectare    | 7.25-10.9                | 21.8                              |
| Himachal Pradesh | Acre       | 10-15                    | 30-70                             |
| Jammu Kashmir    | Acre       | 8 <sup>13</sup> /10-12.5 | 14 <sup>12</sup> -22 <sup>8</sup> |
| Karnataka        | Acre       | 10-30                    | 54                                |
| Kerala           | Acre       | 12-15                    | 12-15                             |
| Madhya Pradesh   | Acre       | 18-27                    | 54                                |
| Maharashtra      | Acre       | 18-36                    | 54                                |

|               |         |         |             |
|---------------|---------|---------|-------------|
| Manipur       | Hectare | 5       | 6           |
| Orissa        | Acre    | 10-15   | 30-45       |
| Punjab        | Hectare | 7-11    | 20.5        |
| Sikkim        | Acre    | 12.5-50 | 12.5-50     |
| Tamilnadu     | Acre    | 12      | 60          |
| Tripura       | Hectare | 4-12    | 4-12        |
| Uttar Pradesh | Hectare | 7.30    | 10.95-18.25 |
| West Bengal   | Hectare | 5       | 7           |

(13) Source : Conference of State, Union Territories Revenue Secretaries on Land Reform quoted in Monthly Commentary Annual No. 1982

In the table no.11 limits shown are as per the existing provisions of Land Ceiling Acts. Though limit has been lowered down, than that of Acts. enacted prior to 1972, there has not been any appreciable increase in the availability of surplus land under new act.

## 2. LAND DECLARED AS SURPLUS

It would be advantageous to have a look at the various estimates and papers published relating to the land that can be declared as 'surplus' under the Acts and that would be available for redistribution.

According to National Sample Survey and the Agricultural Census, anticipated surplus land would be as follows.

|                                                | In Million Hectares |
|------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| National Sample Survey 16th Round<br>(1960-61) | 8.87                |
| National Sample Survey 28th Round<br>(1971-72) | 4.80                |
| Agricultural Census (1970-71)                  | 12.10               |
| Agricultural Census (1976-77)                  | 8.88                |

Source (14).

Central Government had appointed a Committee under the Chairmanship of Prof. Mahalanobis in 1965. According to its report, surplus land was to the extent of 630 lakh acres.

In the statistics published by Agriculture Ministry two years after, it was estimated that 400 lakh acres of land would be available as 'surplus' (15)

As per the estimate of Planning Commission, 215.10 lakh acres of land were expected to be declared surplus (16). It can be summarised that surplus land between 80 lakhs to 6 crore acres would be available for distribution.

Out of this how many acres of land were declared surplus?

How much land was actually taken over by Government and how much was distributed amongst poor landless people? It would be educative to ascertain the factual position on these points.

**TABLE NO. 12**  
**PROGRESS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REVISED CEILING ACTS (IN ACRES)**

| State/Union Territory    | Surplus land<br>declared | Possession taken<br>of the land | Percentage<br>rate of<br>col. 3<br>with col.2 | Land<br>distrib-<br>uted | Percentage<br>rate of<br>col. 5<br>with Col. 3 | No. of<br>benefi-<br>ciaries | Average land<br>distributed to<br>single<br>beneficiary |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| 1                        | 2                        | 3                               | 4                                             | 5                        | 6                                              | 7                            | 8                                                       |
| Andhra Pradesh           | 8,79,601                 | 4,44,874                        | 50.6                                          | 3,15,586                 | 71.0                                           | 2,15,377                     | 1.47                                                    |
| Assam                    | 3,84,592                 | 5,07,186                        | 86.8                                          | 3,21,886                 | 63.5                                           | 2,53,513                     | 1.27                                                    |
| Bihar                    | 2,37,590                 | 1,47,643                        | 62.2                                          | 1,41,867                 | 95.5                                           | 1,56,802                     | 0.90                                                    |
| Gujrath                  | 1,46,510                 | 62,058                          | 42.5                                          | 8,093                    | 13.0                                           | 1,973                        | 4.10                                                    |
| Haryana                  | 28,231                   | 19,192                          | 67.8                                          | 19,092                   | 100.0                                          | 5,534                        | 3.45                                                    |
| Himachal Pradesh         | 94,187                   | 93,371                          | 99.1                                          | 3,344                    | 3.6                                            | 4,363                        | 0.77                                                    |
| Karnataka                | 2,79,209                 | 1,12,761                        | 40.5                                          | 63,373                   | 55.7                                           | 13,120                       | 4.83                                                    |
| Kerala                   | 1,20,610                 | 80,828                          | 66.9                                          | 53,091                   | 65.7                                           | 85,885                       | 0.62                                                    |
| Madhya Pradesh           | 3,70,193                 | 2,81,586                        | 76.2                                          | 2,81,586                 | 100.0                                          | 76,892                       | 3.66                                                    |
| Manipur                  | 1,029                    | 36                              | 3.5                                           | -                        | -                                              | -                            | -                                                       |
| Orrisa                   | 1,37,219                 | 1,21,218                        | 88.3                                          | 1,02,415                 | 84.5                                           | 78,201                       | 1.31                                                    |
| Punjab                   | 46,563                   | 16,032                          | 34.4                                          | 12,618                   | 78.7                                           | 3,032                        | 4.16                                                    |
| Rajasthan                | 2,64,939                 | 2,33,496                        | 87.9                                          | 1,29,009                 | 55.4                                           | 27,988                       | 4.61                                                    |
| Tamilnadu                | 80,971                   | 77,618                          | 95.9                                          | 60,237                   | 77.6                                           | 40,514                       | 1.49                                                    |
| Tripura                  | 1,827                    | 1,623                           | 88.8                                          | 1,210                    | 74.6                                           | 1,047                        | 1.16                                                    |
| Uttar Pradesh            | 2,82,884                 | 2,61,164                        | 92.2                                          | 2,33,463                 | 89.3                                           | 1,90,468                     | 1.23                                                    |
| West Bengal              | 1,64,767                 | 1,12,818                        | 67.9                                          | 62,460                   | 55.4                                           | 1,76,461                     | 0.35                                                    |
| Total (All other States) | 39,89,832                | 27,23,976                       | 68.31                                         | 18,96,042                | 69.6                                           | 13,66,317                    | 1.39                                                    |

(17A) Source : Conference of States/Union Territories Revenue Secretaries on Land Reforms quoted in monthly commentary Annual No. 1982

**Table No. 13**  
**STATEWISE LAND CEILING LIMITS AS AGAINST THE**  
**NATIONAL GUIDELINES OF 1972 AND LOWER LIMITS**  
**SUGGESTED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA, 1986-87**

| States                                         | Irrigated with<br>two crops | Irrigated with<br>one crop | Days               |
|------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|
| 1                                              | 2                           | 3                          | 4                  |
| Suggested in<br>National Guidelines<br>of 1972 | 4.05 to 7.28                | 10.93                      | 21.85              |
| Suggested lower<br>ceiling                     | 5.00                        | 7.5                        | 12                 |
| <b>ACTUAL CEILING :-</b>                       |                             |                            |                    |
| Andhra Pradesh                                 | 4.05 to 7.27                | 6.07 to 10.93              | 14.16 to 21.85     |
| Assam                                          | 6.74                        | 6.74                       | 6.74               |
| Bihar                                          | 6.07 to 7.28                | 10.12                      | 12.14 to 18.21     |
| Haryana                                        | 7.25                        | 10.9                       | 21.8               |
| Himachal Pradesh                               | 4.05                        | 6.07                       | 12.14 to 28.33     |
| Jammu & Kashmir                                | 3.6 to 5.06                 | --                         | 5.95 to 9.20       |
|                                                |                             |                            | In Ladakh 7.7 hec. |
| Karnataka                                      | 4.05 to 8.10                | 10.12 to 12.14             | 21.85              |
| Kerala                                         | 4.86 to 6.07                | 4.86 to 6.07               | 4.86 to 6.07       |
| Madhya Pradesh                                 | 7.28                        | 10.93                      | 21.85              |
| Maharashtra                                    | 7.28                        | 10.93                      | 21.85              |
| Manipur                                        | 5.00                        | 5.00                       | 6.00               |
| Orissa                                         | 4.05                        | 6.07                       | 12.14 to 18.21     |
| Punjab                                         | 7.00                        | 11.00                      | 20.50              |
| Rajasthan                                      | 7.28                        | 10.93                      | 21.85 to 70.82     |
| Tamilnadu                                      | 4.86                        | 12.14                      | 24.28              |
| Sikkim                                         | 5.06                        | --                         | 20.23              |
| Tripura                                        | 4.00                        | 4.00                       | 12.00              |
| Uttar Pradesh                                  | 7.30                        | 10.95                      | 18.25              |
| West Bengal                                    | 5.00                        | 5.00                       | 7.00               |

(17A) Source : : National Seminar on Agricultural Labour - Background Paper - Govt. of India, Ministry of Labour, National Commission on Rural Labour, New Delhi - March 8-9, 1990.

NOTE :- 1) The actual ceiling limits for lands having two crops and single crop respectively irrigated in Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh are marginally higher due to classification of land.

2) The actual ceiling limits in respect of dry land in Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan are higher due to hilly Terrain and being desert also respectively.

3) In West Bengal ceiling limits are not dependent upon crop potential. The ceiling is based on the size of the family and is different for irrigated and non-irrigated land.

Central Government periodically announced its intention for rigorous implementation of Land Ceiling Acts. Implementation of provisions of Land Ceiling Acts, since the time they were first passed in 1950-60, has been quite lukewarm. Directions were given in the Sixth Plan (1980-85) for completing the process of acquiring land, declared to be surplus and for its distribution by 1982-83 but the factual position as existed in 1982 can be seen from Table Nos. 12 and 13 ( on page nos 60, 61) (17A).

### 3. REDISTRIBUTION OF LAND

Thus it will be seen that since the inception of the land ceiling programme, a total of 72.51 lakh acres has been declared surplus under the pre-revised and revised ceiling laws. This accounts for less than 2% of the total cultivated area in the country. Of the area declared surplus, 61.45 lakh acres have been taken possession of and 45.86 lakh acres have been distributed 63.30 lakh acres of the area declared surplus has been distributed and given to members of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes who account for 49.20% of the total number of beneficiaries. Out of 22.83 lakh acres declared surplus but not distributed, 13.22 lakh acres are involved in litigation and 7.91 lakh acres are reported to be unfit for cultivation or reserved for afforestation or other public purposes. 1.70 lakh acres are not available for allotment due to miscellaneous reasons.

The position for the 6th and 7th Plan is given below :-

**Table No. 14**  
**Implementation of Land ceiling legislation up to Sept 1989 (Acres in lakhs)**

| Pre-revised and revised ceiling laws | As on 31.3.80 | As on 31.3.85 | Latest compilation on Sept. 1989 |
|--------------------------------------|---------------|---------------|----------------------------------|
| Area Declared surplus                | 69.11         | 72.05         | 72.51                            |
| Area taken possession of             | 47.75         | 56.86         | 61.45                            |
| Area Distributed                     | 32.52         | 42.63         | 45.67                            |
| Scs                                  |               |               | 15.92 (34.86%)                   |
| STs                                  |               |               | 6.23 (13.64%)                    |
| No. of beneficiaries                 | 24.75         | 32.90         | 42.29                            |
| Scs                                  |               |               | 14.98 (35.42%)                   |
| STs                                  |               |               | 5.84 (13.81%)                    |

17 Source : Department of Rural Development

Thus out of estimated 6 crore acre surplus land available for distribution, not even 1/2 crore acres land was actually distributed. This throws light on the casual and deplorable manner of implementation of Land Ceiling Acts, at Government level. Even after 35 years since passing of these acts, the number of landholdings exceeding 10 Hectare is excessively large. 2.4% of total landowners, own 22.8% of total land. This is the tragedy of all Land Reform Laws. Following are important reasons which created such situation.

(a) Absence of firm political will.

More pertinent to note, the socio-economic context exerts a strong dampening

influence on the political will and administrative efficiency with which programmes for land reforms get formulated and implemented. This dimension of the socio-economic context is reflected well in the following observations which interestingly, come from an assessment of the land reforms programme done by the Government of India itself through the department of rural development, ministry of agriculture.

"It is widely recognised that the chief reason for poor implementation of land reform has been the lack of political will. It would not be surprising to expect so, if we appreciate the realities of the rural situation and the development of Indian politics."

"The rural rich maintain their position through use of muscle power and manipulation of administrative and judicial processes. The poor state of land records and a weak revenue administration also serve the rural rich who hold land in excess of ceiling despite all the land laws and violate tenancy laws as well. The dominant faction in Indian politics is recruited from rural rich. It is lack of political will to act against this class which ultimately characterises the lack of political will of state governments."

"This ambivalence at the political level is matched by an administrative style in the bureaucracy. A good officer (is one who) accomplishes 'token' implementation.... (for example) collector who would allot land to the rural poor by force or legal harassment. Such a style of functioning, accomplishing 'token' implementation, is efficient on paper, and appreciated by vested interests.... the role of police and revenue machinery, especially at the lower level, in implementation of land reforms has also been negative., (17-B)

(b) Absence of unions of beneficiaries (under the acts). Consequently no pressure could be exerted on Govt.

(c) Absence of effective Govt. Machinery for speedy implementation.

(d) Beneficiaries were deprived of benefits, as many cases were under litigation, which prolonged for years together (18).

Since there was no proper implementation of Land Ceiling Acts, at number of places in the country, Social Tension and Strifes flared up. The poor were further victimized. In result, violence and Naxalite movement got a boost. Much research has been made in relation to Naxalite movement. Recently Rabindra Ray who was actively associated with this movement in the past but who is now inclined to take an objective view of his past experiences, has brought out a book (18A). It throws light on this subject.

In this connection example of Jehanabad Dist. in Bihar is noteworthy. Government administration compiled a secret report in October 1988 in connection with tensions and strifes in the District. Detailed information relating to implementation of Land Ceiling Acts in the District has been given therein. This is in the form of Appendix to the report. As mentioned therein, only 581 acres land was declared as surplus in the District till the end of 1986-87. Out of this 428 acres was taken over by the Government and distributed amongst 528 beneficiaries. But even here great injustice has been done to scheduled castes and tribes. Taking possession of land and its distribution is on paper only. Beneficiaries have not got actual possession of land (19). Naxalite movement is

getting firmly and deeply rooted in Bihar and elsewhere. This situation has arisen mainly due to shoddy implementation of land reform acts and resultant problems and discontent. In conclusion, it has to be stressed that in the interest of country and of social security, Land Reform Laws have to be strictly enforced.

The concept of Land Reforms Act has undergone a favourable change in 7th Five Year Plan (1985-90). It has been stated therein that "Any Poverty Eradication Programme should mainly endeavour to provide sufficient resources to those who are either not having any such resources or having very meagre ones, to enable them to increase production. Therefore, Land Reforms Act, providing for equitable redistribution of land and the programme for conferring ownership rights to land on tenants should be an integral ingredient of any Poverty Eradication Plan. Then only large number of landless poor will be able to have source (in form of land so equitably redistributed) of income and it will help them to augment the same.

Likewise, consolidation of landholdings, tenancy acts, and updating revenue records, will enable them to avail of modern agricultural technology and assistance from various other sources."

Thus, Land Reforms Acts became the mainstream of Rural Development Programmes.

Such radical change in objectives and concepts of Land Reforms, was of some help in effective implementation of the Land Reforms Acts and in giving proper direction and thrust to Rural Development Schemes. Similarly co-ordinate policies and actions of Revenue Department and Rural Development Department also proved very beneficial in achieving successful implementation of Land Reforms Acts.

#### 4. FRAGMENTATION & CONSOLIDATION OF LAND HOLDINGS

Consolidation of Landholdings Act is of importance in relation to the increase in agricultural production and economics of agricultural activities. These acts were passed in various States after 1947. Such Acts are essential for securing planned progress in agriculture. Lot of obstacles had to be encountered not only on account of numerous small land holdings but also on account of the fact that such small landholdings owned by the farmers were spread over in different parts of village.

Another major difficulty is that in a village, price of such landholdings, spread over at different places, varies from part to part. Prices are relatively higher where water is available. No unsurmountable hindrance is seen in such places in consolidation of landholdings.

In almost all States, such Acts have been passed. Implementation of these legislations was comparatively more effective in Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh (20). Such Acts were not viewed as an integral part of integrated rural development programmes. Hence implementation of the same was rather unsatisfactory.

At the end of the year 1959-60, consolidation had been effected in respect of 23 million acres of land only. Next 15 years witnessed a better progress in this direction. At the end of year 1973-74, this figure rose to 97.1 million acres. Till March 1990

consolidation of Land had been effected in respect of 111.20 million acres (21).

### **(D) Green Revolution**

Due to influence of certain external factors, Agriculture and its related activities experienced some changes after 1950 e.g. various Land Reforms Acts, Abolition of Zamindari Acts, Tenancy Acts, Landholdings Acts etc. Another important factor, which contributed in this process, was the new policy formulated by Government after 1960 in relation to agriculture by adopting and using modern agricultural technology.

#### **1. WHAT IS GREEN REVOLUTION**

After 1950, big landlords and capitalists endeavoured to carry out agricultural activities on commercial and capitalistic pattern. Agricultural policy based on modern technology adopted by Government after 1960, helped in accelerating such process. Green Revolution is the product of this policy. Programme for producing high yielding varieties of seeds, received top priority in new agricultural policy but this programme alone cannot be equated with 'Green Revolution', which has to be viewed as a broad and comprehensive philosophy of Rural Reconstruction (22). This philosophy includes increased use of modern tools, machinery, high yielding variety of seeds, electrically operated water pumps for proper utilization of well water, chemical fertilizers, pesticides etc. in agriculture.

Some experts felt that such new technology would help in increasing agricultural production and the benefits would gradually percolate to the last layer of social strata, resulting in reduction of rural poverty, though it may not totally eradicate the same. It would be worthwhile to take stock of the situation in this respect. In present times, we see emergence of three prominent classes in rural areas viz. (1) Rich and wealthy landlords undertaking agricultural activities using commercial and capitalistic methods. (2) Middle class agriculturists and (3) Marginal farmers, landless agricultural labour and other rural poor. Which class has reaped the benefits of Green Revolution programme? Similarly, it has to be ascertained whether parts of country where facilities are available due to new agricultural technology for utilization of well and canal water and land is more fertile having more agricultural production, give more yield compared to other parts of country and if so, whether such disparity gives rise to regional imbalances. Whether new agricultural technology, has given rise to regional imbalances and inter-class disparities? If answer is in the affirmative, it would be educative to analyse the causes which give rise to such disparities.

#### **2. CAUSES OF ECONOMIC DISPARITY**

Agricultural Policy adopted and implemented by the Government after 1960 has caused imbalances between regions where water is available throughout the year on account of irrigation facilities and the ones which are dependent on seasonal rains only. Main reason for such state of affairs is that the policy laid down for bringing about Green Revolution, was primarily meant to cover regions where there were permanent

irrigation facilities (23). Government officials connected with rural development plans further provide the agriculturists in these regions in particular, high yielding variety seeds, chemical fertilizers etc. as a result of which average income of an agriculturist family in these regions is more as compared to the income of its counterpart residing in other regions, dependent only on seasonal rains. Therefore, disparity of income of these agriculturists in two regions is quite glaring.

Process of emergence of different classes based on economic disparity has started in rural areas. Green Revolution has further accelerated this process. In consequence the number and proportion of landless agricultural labour and Bataidars in relation to the rural households has considerably increased; because landlords deprived many a tenants of land, rendering them landless (24).

States of Punjab and Haryana are considered to be models of wheat based Green Revolution but S/Shri Chhadda and Bhalla have effectively focussed our attention on the distressing situation relating to inequitable distribution of income amongst rural households existing in these States.

Based on their studies and surveys, they have come to the conclusion that, average annual income of marginal farmer in Punjab (holding 2.5 acres of land) was Rs. 1,231/-, while that of big landlord (cultivating land exceeding 25 acres) was Rs. 24,283/-. That is to say that disparity of income was in the ratio of 1:20 (25). This revelation underlines the fact that marginal farmer who himself tilled the land along with his family members was living in abject poverty as compared to rich and wealthy landlord and his family members, who do not actually engage themselves in the cultivation of land.

Rural Economic disparity, thus prominently existing in Punjab, which has reaped the fruits of Green Revolution, is also revealed by the administrative policy of Punjab State Electricity Board. Punjab Electricity Board had formulated a plan for supplying electricity on priority basis to agriculture sector. It stipulated that agriculturist paying a sum of Rs. 10,000/- was to be supplied electricity on priority basis. This sum was later on reduced to Rs. 7,000/-. But who was in a position to pay such a large sum? Who was ultimately benefitted by the scheme? A study conducted in 1984 shows that only 35% of agriculturists in Punjab availed themselves of this facility.

### **3. HAZARDS TO AGRICULTURAL LABOUR**

Majority of the beneficiaries were rich agriculturists. This was on account of the fact that only those wealthy agriculturists could afford to bear expenses of getting electric power connections (26). This is a glaring example of economic disparity then prevalent in different classes in regions experiencing Green Revolution.

In such regions, new technology and mechanization on large scale was resorted to extensively in agriculture. Electric pumps, fertilizers and crushers came into use in large numbers. The benefits were obviously reaped by rich agriculturists but in contrast, landless labour was exposed to grave dangers such as physical injuries, loss of limbs, and at times deaths due to accidents. Situation as obtained in Punjab bears testimony to this fact. Agricultural Sector in Punjab started using mechanical equipments as early as 1960.

Till 1979, 1 lakh 70 thousand crushers were in use in 12000 villages in Punjab. This machinery was of inferior standard. Hundreds of agricultural labourers from Bihar and other States such as Orissa etc. come to Punjab in every season. Many workers lost limbs and about 500 died while working overtime and due to heavy pressure of workload. In that year i.e. in 1979, about 5000 workers died in the whole country on account of machine accidents.

Out of them many were down-trodden as observed by Amarjeet Chandan (27). In 1985, 1000 agricultural labourers in Punjab, Haryana, and Western parts of Uttar Pradesh were involved in accidents while operating wheat crushers. They lost their limbs (hands, feet). Many of them had come from other States to find seasonal agricultural work (28). As at the end of 1985, about 10,000 workers immigrating to these States from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Orissa were involved in accidents while operating machines.

Necessary amendments have not yet been incorporated in the existing Workmen's Compensation Act 1923 for providing adequate compensation to such workers involved in accidents.

Extensive use is being made of chemical fertilizers and insecticides for crop protection. This activity, it is generally observed, is not undertaken by landlords themselves. Labour is employed on daily rate basis. This work of spraying insecticides adversely affects health of labourers. Effect is not seen immediately, if poisonous elements are inhaled by such labourers in small quantity. But in due course, after this poison gets gradually assimilated in blood, ill effects become visible. Spraying of insecticides gives rise to acute or chronic toxicity but these workers are not provided with preventive equipment for enabling them to safeguard themselves against such hazard or not given any medical aid (29). John P. Mencher has also observed that the problem of pesticide usage in Indian rice regions pose a serious threat to the health of rural people in general and agricultural workers in particular. Agricultural workers exposed to pesticides are exposed to health-hazards from both acute and chronic poisoning (29A).

Employers should be made responsible, by Law, for providing necessary protective means for safeguarding health of such labourers. Workers engaged in spraying insecticides must be provided with masks and goggles, by the employers. For this, relevant provision must be made in the Acts. Likewise, it must be legally binding to conduct medical examination of such workers at the conclusion of the job, at the expense of the employers or the Government. But these just demands and suggestions are likely to fall on deaf ears in the present socio-economic set up and it would be a cry in the wilderness to expect any positive response.

What was the effect of Green Revolution on the poverty conditions in Rural areas? Whether rural poverty has been abolished or reduced in view of increased agricultural production due to new technology? How the standard of living of agricultural labour has been affected?

#### **4. DECLINE IN EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME**

Number of studies have been conducted in this regard during last 15-20 years and

the conclusions drawn have also been published. According to some scholars high yield variety seeds and the mechanised farming have helped in increasing production in exemplary fashion. In their opinion it is possible to abolish rural poverty by adopting new technology and rural poverty and unemployment have been gradually diminishing. On the contrary, number of studies published have proved the hollowness of such inferences. According to these reports, though Green Revolution has been instrumental in increasing agricultural production, it has not been of any assistance in removal or reduction of rural poverty and disparities.

Some scholars have studied the effects of Green Revolution on weaker sections of the society. In their opinion, the conditions of agricultural labour has generally not further worsened by the Green Revolution. They feel that agricultural production has increased to a large extent and the benefits of Green Revolution have been percolating to the (lower strata) weaker section of the society. In places, where rich rural agriculturists have been instrumental in obstructing such percolation of benefits, strong and militant organisations of agricultural labour are formed. This enables the labour to secure higher wage rates and to improve the standard of living (30). Organizational strength of agricultural labour enhances their power of collective bargaining they are and ultimately benefitted.

However, this optimistic theoretical view is untenable according to many other scholars. Poverty in rural areas is likely to be reduced, only if more employment opportunities are created. What has been the effect of Green Revolution on rural employment? It has been observed that marginal farmers have become poorer and joined the ranks of landless peasants. In rural areas, rich agriculturists are in control of means of production and they exercise their hold on rural credit institutions. Therefore, it would be only a mirage and day dreaming to think that Green Revolution in its wake, would automatically, eradicate or reduce rural poverty (31). What is the effect of Green Revolution on the real wages of Agricultural workers in Punjab and Haryana? G. Parthasarathi observed that technologically leading States such as Haryana and Punjab do not show a rise in real wages. Real wages in these States were either slightly negative as in Punjab or stagnant as in Haryana. This is inspite of the fact that levels of money wages in Punjab and Haryana continue to be the highest and are nearly double the corresponding wage rates in the technologically lagging States (31A).

Use of wheat crushers, electrical pumps and tractors on large scale in agriculture in Punjab has adversely affected agricultural labour. Mechanization has resulted into dwindling demand for workers. As a result the number of days of employment were reduced. This was the observation of Bilingas and Singh (32).

Calories available in daily food to agricultural labour give an indication of the incidence of poverty. Experience in this regard in State like Punjab, which has witnessed Green Revolution, is quite alarming. 1/3rd of marginal peasants (cultivating land upto 2.5 acres), 1/4th of medium level farmers (with landholding from 2.5 to 5.0 acres) are living below poverty line i.e. to say that they are not able to get minimum number of

calories, from their daily intake of food, as has been pointed out by Bhalla and Chhadda (33). After making a survey and study of 10 villages in Balsad Taluk in Central Gujarat, Bhavarsing has also drawn the same conclusion. He has stated that between 40% to 60% of populace in the said villages, is living below poverty line, if minimum requirement of 2250 calories daily is taken as a norm (1969-70). Poverty and its intensity varies from class to class in rural areas, as per another observation made by them (34). The impact of new technology on the agrarian structure between the mid 1960s and the late 1970s was analysed by Byres in the late 1970s on the then available evidence. The picture projected from the review seems to be one of increasing impoverishment and proletarianisation of poor peasants, landless labourers and craftsmen. This was a process not initiated but certainly hastened by the operation of the new technology (34A).

An attempt is made, in the discussion so far, to analyse the effects of Green Revolution on Removal of Poverty, employment opportunities, inter-regional and inter-class disparities. There is one more socio-economic dimension to the effect of green revolution. If analysis is made, taking into account this new aspect, light can be thrown on the root causes of terrorism, now holding Punjab population to ransom. Number of leftists and rightists Political Leaders advocate that this problem of terrorism in Punjab is purely political and it can be resolved through a political solution only. There may be some substance in this reasoning. But even if a compromise solution is arrived at between different political parties as regards capital city of Chandigarh or as regards distribution of river/canal waters, terrorists are likely to denounce any such agreements, as per indications now clearly visible.

Basic problem of distribution of water is somewhat complicated. Both the States of Punjab and Haryana are going to benefit by Satluj Yamuna Canal (SYLink Canal). However, the crux of the water problem lies in the height of the dam now in progress and it is felt that by increasing the height/level, Punjab is going to share more water. Then why the additional costs on account of additional work, should not be proportionately shared by these two States? This is the problem according to some economists and scholars.

Punjab problem is not only political or sociological but it has economic edge also according to well known scholar and labour leader, Shri Dattopant Thengdi. During the last 12 years, the number of landholders has been reduced from 15 lakh to 10 lakhs. Shri Thengdi feels that number of poor youths from 5 lakh peasants rendered landless must have joined the rank of terrorists, swelling their number (35).

As per the Agricultural Census Report published by the Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India, it is seen that the number of landholders rose from 70.5 millions to 89.4 millions in the whole country during the decade 1970-71 to 1980-81 (See table no. 15 on page no. 70). (36)

This period also witnessed increase in population and also the higher fragmentation of landholdings. However, astonishing feature is that despite increase in population, the number of landholders has decreased in Punjab. In 1970-71, this number was 1375 thousand while in 1980-81, it decreased to 1027 thousands, showing a downfall to the

**Table No. 15**  
**NO. OF LANDHOLDERS IN MAJOR STATES, IN 1970-71 AND IN 1980-81**  
**CLASSIFIED ACCORDING TO SIZE OF LANDHOLDING**

(FIGURES IN THOUSANDS)

| State             | Year    | Small Holdings<br>(0-2 Hectares) | Semi-Medium<br>(2-4 Hectares) | Medium Holdings<br>(4-10 Hectares) | Large Holdings<br>(above 10 Hectares) | Total |
|-------------------|---------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------|
| 1. Andhra Pradesh | 1970-71 | 3555                             | 942                           | 689                                | 234                                   | 5420  |
|                   | 1980-81 | 5572                             | 1272                          | 693                                | 162                                   | 7699  |
| 2. Assam          | 1970-71 | 1517                             | 275                           | 94                                 | 8                                     | 1894  |
|                   | 1980-81 | 1886                             | 314                           | 92                                 | 6                                     | 2298  |
| 3. Bihar          | 1970-71 | 5983                             | 915                           | 514                                | 135                                   | 7577  |
|                   | 1980-81 | 9739                             | 951                           | 472                                | 68                                    | 11230 |
| 4. Gujrat         | 1970-71 | 1043                             | 555                           | 601                                | 234                                   | 2433  |
|                   | 1980-81 | 1344                             | 728                           | 686                                | 172                                   | 2930  |
| 5. Haryana        | 1970-71 | 423                              | 205                           | 211                                | 74                                    | 913   |
|                   | 1980-81 | 520                              | 211                           | 216                                | 65                                    | 1012  |

(36) Source : Daya Krishna : 'Organiser' Weekly New Delhi 19 June 1988

extent of 25%. This report further reveals that this reduction in number of landholders has mainly affected small landholders, who numbered 777 thousands in 1970-71 but dwindled to 397 thousands in 1980-81, showing 49% reduction.

Who are the people who have purchased the land of these 380 thousand deprived small landholders? During the said period, the number of big landlords in Punjab increased though in other parts of the country it declined. Categorical inference can, therefore, be drawn that big landlords purchased the landholdings of small landholders in Punjab. This condition in Punjab could be a result of the fact that income of big landlords had considerably increased in Punjab, which ushered in Green Revolution. As a result, small landholders were rendered landless (36).

What are the implications revealed by this statistics, which points out that during the decade 1970-71 to 1980-81, landholdings and the income of big landlords increased while the landholdings and the income of agriculturists owning small holdings decreased? In unmistakable terms, it can be said that implementation of land reforms Acts in Punjab was a mockery of its genuine objective and true intentions, which ultimately culminated in such an alarming situation.

Landless labour in Punjab is experiencing intense discontent and frustration due to increasing population and dwindling income. As a consequence, number of people from this class may be joining terrorist groups. Therefore, mere military or political measures would not be able to solve the problem of terrorism in Punjab. It would be essential to ensure economic rehabilitation of youth, rendered landless and exposed to severe economic imbalances in large number due to lethargic and superficial implementation of Land Reforms Act. Then only the problem of terrorists in Punjab could be solved.

Green Revolution has failed to be instrumental in removing economic disparities in rural Areas. That, social justice and benefits of progress would be available simultaneously to all sections of society is still a dream. If the present social and economic structure, remains unchanged, there is no hope of converting this dream of ours into a reality. Unless radical changes are effected in the concept of fundamental rights and rights to property enshrined in the constitution, the cherished objectives cannot be translated into reality. Therefore, these constitutional provisions need fresh examination, as expressed by many scholars (37).

### **(E) Bhoodan Movement**

Number of attempts in various directions were made in post independence period in India to bring about a change in the prevalent pattern of ownership and distribution of land. All these measures came to be known as 'Programme of Land Reforms'. Intervention of States, which enacted different laws such as Tenancy Acts, Land Ceiling Acts etc. for effecting desired changes in ownership and distribution of land formed part of this programme of Land Reforms. Some other programmes bereft of such direct governmental intervention, also came to be launched. 'Bhoodan Movement' sponsored by Acharya Vinoba Bhave, was one such important programme. Emphasis of this programme was to win over landlords impressing upon them the prime need to make

small sacrifice in the national interest by relinquishing their rights to ownership by donating land. Acharya Vinoba's endeavour in this direction was a unique experiment but scholars did not attach much importance to this effort, as a means of achieving Land Reforms. Since this experiment was mainly based on spiritual and somewhat mystic philosophy of Vinobaji, it came to an end in a very short period, with only a very small achievement to its credit. This may be one of the reasons as to why scholars did not take cognisance of this experiment. Yet, it would not be proper to underestimate the value and importance of the 'Bhoodan Movement'. Noted economist, Prof. Dhananjayrao Gadgil had in 1954 commented on this movement as follows :

"The concept of Bhoodan Movement is quite original, novel and the objectives are radical" (38).

### 1. 'SARVODAYA' - PHILOSOPHY AND COMMUNITY

Acharya Vinoba was a disciple of Gandhiji. He was the follower as well as a great exponent of Mahatma Gandhi's economic, social and spiritual philosophy. Gandhiji was not merely a theorist but his thinking had a social relevance and was backed up by necessary actions. Realization of dream of new social structure, was the foundation of his philosophy. The new social structure, as visualized by Mahatmaji was to have truth and non-violence as the foundation and in this new structure there was no room for any disparity, unhealthy competition, strife and exploitation. This thinking culminated in Gandhiji's 'Sarvodaya' philosophy. As per this new thought, any social, economic or political problem was to be considered taking village as the focal point, since village life formed the core of Indian Social structure. It was thought that there would not be any inequality, if every village becomes self-sufficient.

This 'Sarvodaya' philosophy, visualizes a situation, where rich would regard themselves as trustees of their own properties and that there would not be any anxiety over the future for anyone (39).

But, Alas! on 30th January 1948, Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated. His cherished dream of removal of social disparities, rich considering themselves as trustees, everyone to be free from anxiety over the future, giving rise to happy rural life, free of exploitation remained unfulfilled.

Indications were already visible to side track the basic Gandhian concepts in relation to development and restructuring of rural areas, in the various development programmes planned by the Government.

Vinobaji started thinking over the means which would translate Gandhiji's dream into reality. Vinobaji was deeply engrossed in this process for 3 years i.e. 1949-51. During this period he was physically toiling in the fields, trying to live the life of an ordinary agricultural labourer. This was an experiment of leading a life without money, as dreamt of by him. In 1951, he proclaimed this concept of 'Bhoodan Yajna'. How did he come to formulate this concept? How did he get the glimpse of such a concept? It would be quite thrilling and fruitful to ascertain as to how the experiments and meditation undertaken by Vinobaji in this period of 3 years gave rise to this concept.

3rd Convention of Sarvodaya Community was to be held in 1951 April at Shivrampalli in Hyderabad State.

Shri Shankarrao Deo cordially invited Vinobaji to attend the said convention. Vinobaji accepted the invitation and accordingly started from Pavnar, his walking expedition to Shivrampalli.

Situation in Telangan region of the then Hyderabad State was very tense and deplorable. Poor peasants were severely exploited by rich landlords. Number of villages and thousands of acres of land was owned by some Jahagirdars, Deshmukhs or big landlords. Especially in the districts of Nalgonda, Mahibubnagar and Warangal, ownership of land was concentrated in large share in the hands of few Zamindars. Jahagirdars or Deshmukhs who were addressed in local parlance as "Dora - Duri", meaning lord, master or ruler. This class wielded unlimited power in three capacities viz. Landlord, Moneylender and village officer. They enjoyed unfettered power in getting the work done by poor treating them as serfs. Majority of such workers facing servitude belonged to untouchable communities (40). Communists fully exploited this situation to their advantage. During the period from 1942 to 1946, small farmers, tenants and landless agricultural labour came to be influenced by communists. In post IIInd World War period, communists launched an armed struggle against serfdom and exploitation, in these districts. Zamindars fled away.

Government officials were frightened. Zamindars started assaulting poor labourers, using hired rowdies. Nizam's lackeys, the Razakars, let loose hail in the said region by resorting to massacres, looting and abduction of women. Communists forcibly took over the lands of big Zamindars and distributed the same to landless labour. Communists and the Razakars under the garb of communism unleashed terror and violence in Telangana. The communists embarked on distribution of land usurped, by killing number of landlords (41). On 13th September 1948, Indian Government resorted to Police Action against Hyderabad State and brought to an end the upsurge and rowdism, then prevalent in the said State. In this process, about 3 lakh citizens from Nalgonda, Warangal, Karimnagar and Hyderabad Districts were subjected to great torture. About 50000 people were arrested and kept in custody for days and months and 2000 people were killed (42). Common man was crushed in this reign of terror inflicted on him by both, the communists and the Government.

Sarvodaya convention was held in April 1951 at Shivrampalli, in such tense situation then obtaining. Vinobaji was deeply grieved because of the deplorable situation and for loss. He was obsessed with one thought, as to how to combat this situation of injustice and strife and as to how social justice and peace can be reestablished.

In such a frame of mind, on conclusion of the convention Vinobaji left Shivrampalli on 15.4.1951 and embarked on 'Padayatra' (Foot March) in the said region. As a soldier of Peace Corps Vinobaji wished to spread the gospel of peace. Perhaps, he might have agreed to attend the Sarvodaya Convention only with an objective to find a solution to this grave and complicated problem; for he had already studied the problem in minutest

detail. He arrived at the conclusion that the root cause of disturbed conditions was the unjust and unequitable distribution of ownership of land. He also saw that few rich people were owners of thousands of acres of land while the remaining were landless. In the absence of employment opportunities, people had to face the pangs of poverty. Vinobaji, after 3 days of 'Padayatra', reached village Pochampalli, on 18.4.1951. Communists had a strong hold over this region. There was no end to constant bloodshed. This village had 700 households and about 3000 population. Vinobaji went round the village and had discussion with many persons. People used to flock around him wherever he went as the people knew him as 'Saint of Pavnar.' He visited the locality of backward class community (Harijans). He could see, there around him the woes, and abject poverty of those people, who needed land for their livelihood. They requested Vinobaji to urge upon the Government to make available such land. Vinobaji said, "What is the use of help given by such Government? Unless and until we are able to stand on our own, Government help would not be of any use" (43).

Immediately, he inquired whether any Zamindar was willing to transfer his land to landless people. Ramchandra Reddy, a very noble and philanthropic person who was sitting in the audience, instantly rose up and confidently declared, "Acharya, I am willing to donate the land".

Vinobaji promptly asked, "How much?" Ramchandra Reddy responded, "As much as you want". Simultaneously he declared that he would donate 100 acres of land owned by him. Vinobaji was startled. He again put the same question to Ramchandra Reddy who firmly reiterated his offer of donating 100 acres of land. He signed the document, donating his 100 acres of land and handed over the same to Vinobaji. That evening, at the prayer time, atmosphere was surcharged with unique spiritual happiness.

## **2. BHOODAN YAJNA (SACRIFICE AND DONATION OF LAND)**

Vinobaji got the first glimpse of light, which showed the way of solving problems of landless people and thus started the 'Bhoodan Yajna' movement. He resolved to go from house to house in Telangana, which was under the spell of agony, inflicted by unabated violence and bloodshed, to spread the message of Bhoodan movement. The first experience of 'Bhoodan programme' strengthened his faith in non-violence.

He was now sure that socio-economic problems of the rural poor can be solved through non-violent movement. Vinobaji toured Telangana for 51 days, visited 200 villages and addressed about 2 lakh people. In this sojourn he could secure donation of 12201 acres of land (44).

Vinobaji returned to Pavnar after his tour of Telangana. On the basis of his experience in Telangana, Vinoba firmly felt that if proper direction and opportunity are made available, poor populace can solve its problems on its own (i.e. without necessity of having external assistance). On return to Pavnar, Vinobaji declared, "The programme, that I have now started is known as Bhoodan Yajña. This is a sacred duty and all are expected to lend their whole-hearted cooperation. As long as I am fit by God's grace, I will move throughout the country and beg for land for the landless. All

have equal right over land, as in the case of Air, Water and Light. Therefore, there should be equitable distribution of land". (45)

According to many Sarvodaya activists, Vinobaji's Telangana tour was mainly undertaken for the 3rd annual Sarvodaya Conference, and there the concept of Bhoodan Movement suddenly dawned in his mind. But it is rather difficult to accept the said proposition in toto, because while on tour in Telangana propogating the concept of Bhoodan Yajña, Vinobaji met the communist leaders who were then detained in Jail (46).

Scanty information is available as to what had transpired in these meetings. However, it would be worthwhile to note that after the meeting, number of communist leaders held in prison were released and within few months thereafter, communists withdrew their armed struggle (Oct. 1951). This communist struggle was mainly launched for taking possession of land, owned by Zamindars forcibly and to distribute the same amongst the landless. If all things are considered together, a doubt arises whether Vinobaji had launched Bhoodan Yajña movement with a view to put a halt to the destructive struggle undertaken by communists? However, there is no room for entertaining such a doubt, which appears to be misplaced and unsupported by evidence. In the context of wide spectre of objectives, the spiritual foundation and the high cultural values forming a back drop of this 'Bhoodan Yajña Movement', it is not possible to accept the view that Vinobaji launched this movement to achieve the political objectives.

What is the objective of Bhoodan Yajña Movement?

What is the final stage into which the movement is expected to culminate?

### 3. OBJECTIVES OF BHOODAN MOVEMENT

The purpose underlying this Bhoodan Yajña Movement is to recreate peaceful non-violent rural social structure, based on village industries and conferring the ownership of available land to village community (47). The movements is not restricted only to the process of obtaining land and its distribution.

It is a hymn sung in prayer of God, enshrined in men's heart. Bhoodan movement advises to do away with ownership of land, as all land belongs to God. For centuries, ownership of land has been concentrated in the hands of few and this gave rise to social disparities. To do away with this unjust system and to make land available to landless labour is the main objective of Bhoodan movement. The programme firmly underlines the futility of compulsion and violent measures in achieving the objective and believes that the objective would be achieved by non-violent measures based on love. It lays emphasis on Mahatma Gandhi's concept of righteous means.

Redistribution of land is only a first step. Bhoodan movement radically aims in creation of new outlook, new man, in the end. It is a gradual evolution. Vinobaji has spelt out three different stages of this evolution viz. (A) change of outlook (heart), (B) change of life style and (C) transformation of social structure. If these stages are neglected i.e. if the rich are forced to give up their ownership right of land without any

efforts to change their thoughts, views, it may result in violence and counterrevolution. By citing examples from Telangana, Russia and other places, Vinobaji makes it clear that the problem cannot be solved by violent means. It is the firm belief of Vinobaji that it would be better to attempt to bring about change of zamindars' hearts by persuading them to adopt the culture of sacrifice than to forcibly grab their land.

Novel definition of 'Dan' as appearing in 'Bhoodan' has been given by Vinobaji. This definition shuns out the idea of 'Superiority' and 'Inferiority' and lays emphasis on equitable or just distribution. - Dan Samavibhag. It is Vinobaji's firm conviction that ultimate goal of Bhoodan Yajña is to establish society based on equality.

Vinobaji also believes that 'Bhoodan Yajña Movement' initiated to solve the problem of redistribution of land, will ultimately transform National Life. This movement is based on spirituality and unity of soul. It is necessary to concentrate on these principles even at the cost of life. According to Vinoba, for the ultimate success of the movement complete self-surrender by the activists is a must. Volunteers should involve themselves fully in the movement as their religious duty.

The seven objectives of The Bhoodan movement, pronounced by Vinobaji were as follows :-

- (a) Inculcate the spirit of morality, creating an urge for eradication of poverty, abdication of feeling of ownership.
- (b) Removal of class conflict and class consciousness.
- (c) Renaissance of Indian Culture, based on the philosophy of Sacrifice (Yajña). Dan (Donation) and Penance (Tapa).
- (d) Establish Internal Peace.
- (e) Strive for World Peace.
- (f) Unification of political parties.
- (g) To achieve national unity and strength (48).

Broad based noble philosophy had inspired Vinobaji to formulate the above objectives. However, it is also true that in Vinobaji's philosophy there is an element of mysticism. This has prompted some, to criticize this 'Bhoodan Movement' and has also given rise to misgivings.

#### 4. ACHIEVEMENTS OF BHOODAN MOVEMENT-A CRITICAL REVIEW

Many economists, political thinkers and sociologists have widely criticised 'Bhoodan Movement'. Even the followers of Mahatma Gandhi have expressed doubts and difference of opinion, in regard to this movement, from time to time.

That, goals of Bhoodan Movement are not quite clear is one of the objections raised by some. It is argued that the movement is capable of creating Stateless social structure. However, spokesmen of this movement are keeping mum as to how this could be achieved and what benefits society could derive. Contention of advocates of this movement, is, that to secure greatest good of the greatest number is their goal. The movement shuns violence and puts faith in mutual love and tolerance. Having implicit faith in the inherent goodness in the heart of human being this movement aims at

bettering the lot of common people and downtrodden class. Any movement that supports the cause of these sectors is welcome in the context of abject "Poverty in India."

The objection raised by some has thus been answered by the proponents of the movement.

Another objection is that the 'Bhoodan Movement' is meant only for landless, but has no programme or place in respect of vast number of rural poor, who own small landholdings but are compelled to work on wages, on account of poverty, on the land of others. Therefore, the movement is not comprehensive but it deals with one facet and is one dimensional philosophy. In Vinobaji's opinion, the problem of landless, is more important and acute and therefore this movement, initially, has limited objective of finding a solution to the problem of landless. However, ultimately the movement is bound to culminate in securing abolition of ownership of land and as such, it would be proper and reasonable to limit the scope at the start for landless alone.

One more important objection is that the land donated in this Bhoodan Movement is not fertile and is unsuitable for cultivation. Mira Bahen, noted follower of Mahatma Gandhi feels that 80% of land, received in donation, is fallow and barren (49). This land can be used for grazing the cattle or is covered by forests. According to advocates of Bhoodan Movement, this objection is superfluous and raised on wrong and insufficient data. They maintain that out of 42, 27, 476 acres of land received as donation in the movement, till 1964, only 14, 84, 130 acres of land was unsuitable for cultivation. This shows that percentage of land unsuitable for cultivation was only 35.8% (50).

A psychological factor also needs to be considered in connection with this objection. When any owner of land shows his willingness to donate land in any quantity or of any quality, in response to Bhoodan Yajña Movement, it reflects his nature to sacrifice and this is ample testimony to the change in his mental attitude. The possibility of the seeds of sacrifice bearing more fruits at a later date, cannot be denied. Therefore, the attitude of a donor giving land of inferior quality cannot be said to be objectionable.

Another drawback of Bhoodan Movement, as felt by some, is that it is not likely to rehabilitate landless agricultural labour, who are recipients of land, received in the movement. Since they are not in a position, being poverty-stricken, to cultivate the land and reap the harvest. They have received the land without any financial help or ancillary tools, in the absence of which, gifted land is only a burden for them. Therefore, beneficiary should receive along with land, the required monetary and auxiliary help so that he can be rehabilitated, in real terms. Otherwise, agricultural production, is bound to decrease. Therefore, Vinobaji also propogated 'Sadhan Dan Yajña', calling upon the people to donate plough, bullocks etc. Vinobaji also agrees with the view that goals of 'Bhoodan Yajña', could not be attained, if financial help and other assets are not provided to landless agricultural labour, along with land.

Considering the philosophy underlying Bhoodan Movement, objections raised and the replies thereto of supporters of this movement, it would be quite educative to ascertain the totality of effect of this movement.

What was the target regarding land to be received by way of donation in this movement? How much was actually received and what portion thereof, was distributed?

Following tables will be able to throw some light on the above points See Table No. 16, 17 on page no. 79, 80).

It was expected by sponsors of the movement that 5 crore acres of land would be received in donation upto 1957. This was the ambitious target, set by them, to be achieved by dedicated workers by appealing to the moral and sublime feelings of the people. Therefore, it is not at all astonishing that workers participating in the movement could get only a limited success in realization of the target. Till the end of 1957, only 1/10th of target could be reached(53). The cherished dream of the Bhoodan movement, of bringing about radical change in the system of ownership of land by 1957, was shattered. This was due to unrealistic and highly ambitious expectations of the sponsors and workers. It may also be due to unrealistic and superfluous faith put in the moral, godly and pious sentiments of human mind.

However, it has to be conceded that, Bhoodan Movement, if viewed as a new and distinct philosophy, is successful to a limited extent. Man is the epicentre of this movement. Special feature of this concept is to instil a feeling in the minds of people that there is sublime joy in making sacrifice (giving donations) for the welfare of society as a whole.

This movement, visualises people coming together, holding mass debate and striving for happiness of all. This is a radical attempt to create 'Sarvodaya Community'. In this process of social welfare progress and enhancement of values, it is expected, that all and not only few individuals or small group should participate actively. This is the noble and broad concept of this movement. Individual is invited to identify himself with the whole society. Bhoodan Movement wishes people to be geared up spontaneously to action by their inherent moral and idealistic sentiments, rather than motivated by small minded nature, which may be the product of selfishness, collective oppression or slavery. The success of this movement lies in this new psychological change. This movement has now become a part of the history. Nevertheless, it occupies a unique place of pride in various programmes of land reforms, launched upon, for bringing about radical change in the system of land-ownership. However, the question still remains unanswered as to what is the total effect of this nationwide movement on the problems of landless and the agricultural labour. Answer, if there be any, is not likely to be encouraging.

#### **(F) Relevance Of Land Reforms**

As seen from the overview of the land reforms given above, agricultural labourers have considerable stakes in the programme. Tenancy reforms were basically adopted for providing ownership rights to the share croppers and small tenants. Redistributive aspects of land reforms were to provide a permanent asset and income generating activities on land as the means of subsistence to this class of people. Fixation of rent is also aimed at providing equitable share to the poor in increased productivity from land.

**TABLE NO. 16**  
**TARGET OF BHOODAN MOVEMENT AND THE LAND ACTUALLY**  
**RECEIVED IN DONATION TILL JULY 1952**

| State .                                   | Target<br>(in acres) | Donated land<br>(in acres) |
|-------------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Assam                                  | 25,000               |                            |
| 2. Andhra                                 | 1,00,000             |                            |
| 3. Uttar Pradesh                          | 5,00,000             | 3,04,370 (6.9.1952)        |
| 4. Orissa                                 | 50,000               | 2,000                      |
| 5. Gujrat                                 | ---                  | 2,500                      |
| 6. Tamil Nadu                             | 1,00,000             |                            |
| 7. Delhi                                  | 10,000               | 1,000                      |
| 8. Punjab                                 | 1,00,000             |                            |
| 9. Bihar                                  | 4,00,000             |                            |
| 10. West Bengal                           | 1,00,000             |                            |
| 11. Madhya Pradesh                        | 1,00,000             | 7,363                      |
| 12. Maharashtra                           | 1,00,000             |                            |
| 13. Central India                         | 1,00,000             | 2,000                      |
| 14. Rajasthan                             | 2,00,000             | 1,000                      |
| 15. Vindhya Pradesh                       | 40,000               | 1,000                      |
| 16. Hyderabad                             | 1,00,000             | 30,214 (25.10.1952)        |
| Others (including Andhra<br>& Tamil Nadu) |                      | 12,200                     |
| <b>Total</b>                              | <b>20,25,000</b>     | <b>3,63,647</b>            |

(51.) Source. S.S.S. records Varanasi, 'Bhoo dan Movement in India' by Raghavendra Nath. Mishra.

**TABLE NO. 17**  
**LAND RECEIVED IN BHOODEN MOVEMENT AND THAT DISTRIBUTED TILL 1964**

| State'              | Land Received<br>(in acres) | Land Distributed<br>(in acres) |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Assam            | 11,935                      | 295                            |
| 2. Andhra           | 2,41,952                    | 1,02,033                       |
| 3. West Bengal      | 12,887                      | 3,825                          |
| 4. Bihar            | 21,32,772                   | 2,77,660                       |
| 5. Delhi            | 300                         | 180                            |
| 6. Gujrat           | 1,03,530                    | 50,984                         |
| 7. Himachal Pradesh | 5,240                       | 2,531                          |
| 8. Jammu & Kashmir  | 5                           | 5                              |
| 9. Kerala           | 26,293                      | 5,774                          |
| 10. Maharashtra     | 1,50,394                    | 1,02,212                       |
| 11. Madhya Pradesh  | 4,04,662                    | 1,39,988                       |
| 12. Mysore          | 20,086                      | 3,123                          |
| 13. Orissa          | 1,57,460                    | 51,102                         |
| 14. Punjab          | 14,739                      | 3,601                          |
| 15. Rajasthan       | 4,30,437                    | 97,774                         |
| 16. Tamilnadu       | 80,433                      | 21,519                         |
| 17. Uttar Pradesh   | 4,34,351                    | 2,07,590                       |
| Total               | 42,27,476                   | 10,70,106                      |

Sources (52.) \*Sarvodaya' April 1965

However, some critics feel that land reforms are proving to be counter-productive to small farmers and agricultural labour.

It is said that farmers are increasingly shying away from employing agricultural labourers because they fear that this may have adverse impact in the long run on title to the land. Tenancy reforms have made it difficult for small farmers to lease-in and lease-out in order to make the holding economically viable. On the other hand, oral tenancy is prevalent in many parts of the country. The surplus land generated due to imposition of ceiling was supposed to be distributed to the landless. In some areas this is only on paper and possession has not actually changed hands. Even where land has been demarcated and possession is given to the landless, it has gone back to the same erstwhile owners after some time due to distress sale by these allottees in the absence of any supporting facilities available to the allottees. Some of these poor allottees have again become landless labourers. The quantum of land allotted per family is also small. The land which was distributed under Bhoodan and other similar programmes was rocky and barren or otherwise agriculturally poor or was under dispute or in litigation. In the absence of any organisational structure among the rural poor and

agricultural labour, the identification and distribution of surplus land were not managed properly in many areas. Land reforms are also reported to have disturbed the traditional inter-dependence which existed among various classes in the rural economy. Although the system was exploitative in nature, it is said, that it provided stability to the landless and rural poor in terms of employment and means of subsistence. With the enforcement of land reforms the class conflict has become very prominent and evidence of social tension is seen in many places. At many places landlords are increasingly relying on migratory labour rather than local labour. This is further increasing the misery of the landless and agricultural labourers.

There might be some semblance of truth in the above contention. However in order to put an end to the existing exploitative socio-economic system and to create a society based on equality, it is necessary to enact land reforms legislations and sincerely implement the same. Taking into consideration the fact that any weakening in the degree of land concentration and loosening of monopoly grip in the rural economy in general and the labour market in particular would lead to a better prospect for agricultural labour. Land reforms help in democratising the socio-economic base of the rural society and create opportunity for the labouring population to struggle for the improvement of their socio-economic status. This will be possible if strong organisation of agricultural and rural labour at the grassroot level is formed and spirit of pure nationalism is inculcated in society at large.

Thus, different legislations in respect of agricultural land enacted after the independence, have not been able to achieve, to the extent required, the objective of Land to the tiller. Even the 'Bhoodan Movement' failed in removing the sociological and psychological barriers which hampered the progress towards this objective. As a result no substantial improvement could be brought about in the economic conditions of landless and agricultural labour. Even the schemes formulated for bringing about the 'Green Revolution' have failed in improving economic conditions of agricultural labour. According to some scholars, the main reason for this failure is that this class of labour has been dealt with in isolation, in the total economic planning. This class has not been viewed and treated as a part and parcel of the comprehensive rural economic planning.

It is further argued by such scholars that if there is not enough and suitable land available for distribution to each and every landless labour, his meagre earnings from land tilling should be supplemented by engaging him in other occupations carried on in the rural sector. In order to bring him above the poverty line, it is stated that this class of agricultural labour and rural poor should be assisted, and if necessary trained and oriented to contribute to earn his share through the different rural economic development programmes.

In view of this, Government launched various Rural and Community Development Programmes through the Five Year Plans formulated for economic development of independent India. How far these programmes have succeeded or failed in improving the socio-economic conditions of agricultural labour is to be assessed in the chapter hereafter.

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## Chapter III

### POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT

After India became independent in 1947, successive Five Year Plans have been formulated for achieving planned development and progress. As embodied in these plans, various development programmes were launched. In the first Five Year Plan 'Community Development Programme' was included and thereafter till the 6th Five Year Plan' numerous programmes and development projects were undertaken. Details of these have been given in the Tables No.18 & 19

Table No. 18  
**RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME**

| Plan Period          | Programme                                               | Year of introduction |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Ist Five Year Plan   | Community Development Programme                         | 1952                 |
|                      | National Extension Service .                            | 1953                 |
| IInd Five Year Plan  | Khadi and Village Industries Programme                  | 1957                 |
|                      | Village Housing Projects Scheme .                       | 1957                 |
|                      | Multi-purpose Tribal Development Block Programme .      | 1959                 |
|                      | Package Programme .                                     | 1960                 |
|                      | Intensive Agricultural District Programme .             | 1960                 |
|                      | Applied Nutrition Programme .                           | 1962                 |
| IIIrd Five Year Plan | Rural Industries Projects .                             | 1962                 |
|                      | Intensive Agriculturl Areas Programme                   | 1964                 |
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|                      | Farmer's Training & Education Programme .               | 1966                 |
|                      | Well Construction Programme .                           | 1966                 |
| Annual Plan 1967     | Rural Works Programme (RWP) .                           | 1967                 |
| Annual Plan 1968     | Tribal Development Block .                              | 1968                 |
| Annual Plan 1969     | Rural Manpower Programme .                              | 1969                 |
|                      | Composite Programme for Women and Pre-school Children . | 1969                 |

|           |                                                    |      |
|-----------|----------------------------------------------------|------|
| IVth Five | Drought Prone Areas Programme .                    | 1970 |
| Year Plan | Cash Scheme for Rural Employment .                 | 1971 |
|           | Small Farmer's Development Agency (SFDA).          | 1971 |
|           | Tribal Area Development Programme .                | 1972 |
|           | Pilot Projects for Tribal Development .            | 1972 |
|           | Pilot Intensive Rural Employment Programme .       | 1972 |
|           | Minimum Needs Programme                            | 1972 |
|           | Command Area Development Programme .               | 1974 |
| Vth Five  | Hill Area Development Programme .                  | 1975 |
| Year Plan | Special Livestock Production Programme .           | 1975 |
|           | Food For work Programme .                          | 1977 |
|           | Desert Development Programme .                     | 1977 |
|           | Whole Village Development Programme .              | 1979 |
|           | Training Rural Youth for Self-employment .         | 1979 |
|           | Integrated Rural Development Programme .           | 1979 |
| VIth Five | National Rural Employment Programme .              | 1980 |
| Year Plan | Prime Minister's New Twenty Point Programme .      | 1980 |
|           | Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas . | 1983 |

1A. Source: Economic and Political Weekly Aug. 1 1987

In 1975 Government launched 20 Point Programme, which underwent certain modifications from time to time till 1986.

Information in this behalf is given in Table No. 19, on page No. 87.

Basically, India being agricultural country, it obviously followed that development of Nation was equated mainly with development of rural society and this thought naturally influenced the Five Year Plans. An attempt is made to analyse the following Four Programmes, in this discussion.

- (A) Community Development Programme (1952).
- (B) Integrated Rural Development Programme (1978).
- (C) National Rural Employment Programme (1980).
- (D) Maharashtra Employment Guarantee (Programme) Scheme (1973).

Table No. 19

|     | 1975                                                    | 1982                                                 | 1986                                    |
|-----|---------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| 1.  | Essential commodities at reduced price                  | Increase in irrigation potential                     | Attack on Rural poverty.                |
| 2.  | Enforcement of land reform measures                     | Increased production of pulses and oilseeds          | Strategy for rain-fed agriculture       |
| 3.  | House site for landless and weaker sections.            | Integrated Rural Development                         | Better use of irrigation water.         |
| 4.  | Ban on Bonded Labour                                    | Enforcement of land reform measures                  | Bigger harvests.                        |
| 5.  | Liquidation of rural indebtedness agricultural labour.  | Enforcement of minimum wages for agricultural labour | Special programme for rural labour.     |
| 6.  | Review of laws on minimum agricultural wages            | Rehabilitation of bonded labourers                   | Enforcement of land reforms.            |
| 7.  | Expansion of irrigation covered by 5 m. hectares.       | Development of scheduled castes and tribes.          | Two Child norm.                         |
| 8.  | An accelerated power programme                          | Drinking water to all problem villages.              | Clean drinking water.                   |
| 9.  | Development of the handloom sector                      | House sites for landless rural families.             | Health for all.                         |
| 10. | Confiscation of smuggler's properties.                  | Improvement of slum life.                            | Expansion of Education.                 |
| 11. | More and better cloth for the people                    | Maximisation of power generation.                    | Justice to scheduled castes and tribes. |
| 12. | Specialisation of urban and urbanisable land.           | Afforestation and alternative energy.                | Equality for women.                     |
| 13. | Prevention of tax evasion                               | Family planning as a people's movement.              | New opportunities for youth.            |
| 14. | Liberalisation of investment products                   | Universal primary health care                        | Housing for the people.                 |
| 15. | National permit for road transport                      | Expansion of the public distribution system.         | Improvement of slums.                   |
| 16. | Income tax relief to middle class                       | Liberalisation of investment procedure               | New strategy for forestry.              |
| 17. | Essential commodities at controlled prices for hostels. | Strict action against smugglers and hoarders         | Protection of the environment.          |
| 18. | Worker's association in industry                        | Improvement in the performance of public enterprises | Concern for the consumer.               |
| 19. | Books and stationery at controlled prices.              | Universal elementary education.                      | Energy for the villages.                |
| 20. | Apprenticeship scheme to enlarge employment             | Welfare of women and children.                       | A responsive administration.            |

Source : E.P.W. Aug 1 1987

### (A) Community Development Programme

There are about 6 lakh villages in India and 72% of the total work force is engaged in Agricultural Industry. Approximately 50% of the National Income is generated by Agriculture and allied industries. Even though, the contribution of Agriculture to national income has consistently shown a downward trend during last 40 years, still the importance and influence of Agriculture over Indian Economy, cannot be underrated. Mahatma Gandhi had then observed that Soul of India resides in villages. Considering all these facts, necessity and importance of Rural Development Programmes can be rightly understood.

Different view points and lot of ideas are put forth for achieving Rural Development. Various experiments carried out in this direction in India are a part of long history. Even in pre-independence period, national scholars, missionaries and social reformers had advocated various measures relating to restructuring village economy and had also launched certain programmes. The notable amongst them are : F.L. Brethric's Gurgaon Project (1920). Internationally lauded Poet, Rabindranath Tagore's Shree Niketan Project (1920), Mahatma Gandhi's 'Sevagram Ashram' (1933), Firka Development Programme in Madras (1946). These and such other programmes were a source of inspiration and provided guidelines for subsequent development programmes for the future (1).

'Grow More Food' campaign, launched in India for bringing about increase in foodgrains can be termed as first and the pioneer collective effort.

In 1943' Bengal experienced severe drought. Coupled with this, Indian Economy had suffered a heavy blow on account of II World War, resulting into disruption of supply and distribution of foodgrains. In such times, 'Grow More Food' campaign was initially launched. However, the campaign could not gather momentum till 1947. The campaign had twin objectives viz. (1) to bring under cultivation the land, which was fertile but allowed to remain barren and (2) to encourage and enthuse the farmer to increase the produce per acre of land. For the first time (in 1948), Thakurdas Committee was appointed for evaluating the progress of the campaign. According to recommendations of this Committee, the campaign. was revamped in 1950-51. In 1952 another Committee under the Chairmanship of V.T. Krishnamachari was appointed for Re-evaluating the progress. This Committee has observed that various aspects of rural life are so integrated, that a lasting solution to rural development problems cannot be found if any particular aspect receives attention in isolation. Another observation that the campaign did not stir the feelings of rural people and thus was not able to attain national level. A number of recommendations were made by the Committee. One of

them envisaged creation of appropriate administrative machinery for rural development and evolve extension programmes for establishing rapport with individual agriculturist in village. Such rapport, it was thought, would be helpful in total integrated development programmes.

Against such background of efforts made in pre and post independence period and keeping in view the recommendations of various committees, Community Development Programme came to be formulated in 1952 and on 2nd October, this Development programme took off in some selected Districts.

National Community Development Programme rested on two assumed premises relevant to the circumstances then obtaining in the country viz. (1) the programme for total rural development must be fully supported by rural public and (2) necessary technological support and other required assistance must be made available. Not only that but spontaneous involvement of rural public in this development programme was also desirable. Decision was taken to establish different democratic institutions like 'Panchayat Raj', Cooperative Societies and Schools etc. for securing such participation of public. Another resolve was to view rural development as an integrated problem and to launch multipronged programme by undertaking simultaneous activities in different spheres. (2)

## **1. OBJECTIVES**

'Community Development Programme', may be defined as follows : "To improve the economic, social and cultural life of the Rural Public, To bring those people in national stream and to build up their capabilities for enabling them to make contribution to the National progress," Community Development Programme is the creation of joint efforts of the public and the government machinery for achievement of these objectives. The core objective of the programme aims at total development of rural resources and human energy.

The underlying idea of this programme, is to improve the standard of living of rural public through various activities e.g. to bring about increase in foodgrain production by embarking upon small irrigation and soil conservation schemes, by providing required seeds and fertilizers to the agriculturists, making available agricultural technology etc.

It may be said that the concept of Community Development and the relevant implementation of extension schemes was adopted by Indian Government in toto from the American Rural Development Programme Blue Prints. It is now well known that certain Institutions like Ford Foundation not only played the role of mediators in this

connection but also extended financial assistance in some proportion for implementation of the programme.

Community Development Programme was formally launched on 2nd October 1952. In the beginning, 55 projects were undertaken. Extension Block comprising of about 300 villages was the administrative centre. Each such Extension Block catered to the needs of about 2 lakh population. The idea was to gradually extend the programme throughout the country. Additional 110 projects were started within a period of six months (2a). Members of Parliament began to exert political pressure for starting more projects.

In 1953, a somewhat less ambitious National Extension Programme was started. In Community Development Programme, extension schemes in all spheres touching rural life were undertaken. Under Extension Programme, some financial assistance as also the man power (employees) was to be made available. The emphasis was on the people starting the extension schemes on their own. These extension Blocks were later on included in 'Community Development Programme'.

Community Development Programme has been restructured since 1st of April 1958. Programme was to be spread over a period of 10 years, comprising 2 periods of 5 years each. Due to political pressure the number of community extension blocks had to be increased. Soon, the programme assumed national proportion. The sphere widened, encompassing 40 crore Rural populace. In 1979-80, the number of extension Blocks rose to 5011.

## **2. SCHEMES UNDER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME**

Under this programme, various extension schemes were undertaken. Prominent amongst them being:

### **a) Agricultural and Allied Jobs**

- i) To bring under cultivation barren land.
- ii) To augment water supply for agricultural land by constructing canals, tube wells, wells - and through lift irrigation schemes.
- iii) Rural Electrification.
- iv) To provide high yielding varieties of seeds and the fertilizers to the agriculturists.
- v) To assist in increased use of modern agricultural technology
- vi) To give wide publicity through various media to development programmes. To equip the agriculturist with information required, through bulletins, pamphlets etc. To use audio-visual media like Cinema, Slides, Radio, TV for spreading information and knowledge relating to agriculture.
- vii) To make available at concessional rate modern agricultural implements and tools.
- viii) To make available loan at lower rate of interest.
- ix) To establish Artificial Insemination Centres to improve the number and quality of cattle.
- x) To encourage small cottage industries.

- xi) To enthuse agriculturist to grow vegetables and fruits by providing him with required facilities.
- xii) To establish laboratories for testing samples of soil.
- xiii) To encourage increased use of natural and chemical fertilizers.
- b) Transport and Communication**
  - i) Construction of new pucca roads.
  - ii) To make available mechanical transport like motorcars, trucks etc.
- c) Education**
  - i) Compulsory and Free Primary education.
  - ii) To establish secondary and pre-secondary schools.
  - iii) To embark upon a wide literacy programme through 'Adult Education' and 'Libraries'.
- d) Health**
  - i) To lay drainage pipe lines for disposal of water etc. To open primary Health Centres.
  - ii) To control and eradicate Malaria and like diseases.
  - iii) To ensure adequate supply of clean drinking water.
  - iv) To provide medical aid to patients.
  - v) To start 'Maternity Homes.'
- e) Training**
  - i) To initiate training programmes for enhancing the skills of rural artisans.
  - ii) To train agriculturists.
  - iii) To conduct training courses for employees, officers, inspectors, connected with Community Development Programme.
- f) Social Welfare**
  - i) To provide community recreation centres.
  - ii) To arrange film and cinema shows etc.
  - iii) To start sports complex.
  - iv) To establish various Co-operative Institutions.
- g) Complementary Industries**
  - i) To encourage cottage industries.
  - ii) To start medium and the small scale industries.
  - iii) To try to meet the requirements of local building industry by starting brick kilns and saw mills.
- h) House building activity**
  - i) To acquaint people with construction technology relevant to Rural areas.
  - ii) To encourage people to build new good houses, with their own resources.

### 3. ADMINISTRATIVE SETUP AND PANCHAYAT RAJ

Community Development Programme is being implemented as a joint venture of Central Government and various States. Administrative set up is of vertical type, with Central Government at the apex, then State, District, Extension Block and village in

descending order. At the village level, the Development Programme was to be administered by employees belonging to 'Gramsevak' and 'Gramsevika' Cadre. It was proposed that share of expenditure of Central and State Government would be equal in some instances while in some others, share of Central Government would be 75% and that of State Government would be 25%.

A separate ministry was formed in 1957 for Community Development Programme. Shri S.K. Dey was appointed as the first (and the last) minister to head the said ministry. Subsequently a committee under the Chairmanship of Balwantrai Mehta was appointed to review the progress of this programme. This committee made a recommendation of three tier system of Panchayat Raj (nomenclature coined by Pandit Nehru). The system envisaged establishment of 'Gram Panchayat', 'Panchayat Samiti' and 'Zilla Parishad' at village, extension block and district levels respectively. These new institutions were vested with wider powers and adequate financial assistance. Two other major and important recommendations were also made by the committee, providing for decentralization of administrative functions and delegation of authority for effective implementation of various development measures and also for placing this decentralized administrative set up under the control of elected representatives of the people. These recommendations allowed the retention of existing Land Revenue machinery and the General Administration through the offices of District Collector, sub Divisional Officers, Tahsildars etc., but Development Programmes were taken away from their purview and allocated to Zilla Parishads for administrative purposes. Thus a separate parallel Development Administration came to be established.

This new system of 'Panchayat Raj' was initially introduced in Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh (1959) and later on was extended to other States. In Maharashtra, the institutions envisaged under the system became operational in 1962. However, the execution did not conform to the same pattern in various States in India but it underwent different changes, depending on local conditions. The implementation of 'Panchayat Raj' was beset with ups and downs. In between 1959 and 1964, it was moving at faster pace, while it was maintaining status quo from 1965 to 1969. From 1969 to 1977, the progress was retarded. Douglas Ensminger, who had been associated in a big way, in formulating the system, has observed while reviewing the progress, that Panchayat Raj System has proved to be most controversial. Bureaucracy and the political leadership had severely criticized the system. In their opinion, instead of putting an end to conflict in rural areas, the system has added an edge to the same. The system was engulfed by petty politics (3).

Again in 1989 the concept of delegation of authority and decentralization of administration had resurfaced with vengeance. It is proposed to introduce suitable amendments to the existing legal provisions, so that Gram Panchayats could be placed under direct control of Central Government. A new legal frame work is being contemplated, which would only keep informed the States of Financial assistance given directly to Gram Panchayats by Central Government for implementing Development Programme. Nationwide debate is taking place on this issue.

At the outset, U.S.A. provided financial aid on large scale, for this programme, as per the agreement on Technical Collaboration, (1952). 8.67 million Dollars were given by way of loan in 1952 by U.S.A. Without any assistance coming from Central or State Government, the public had to bear its share of expenditure. The public participation and co-operation was the salient feature of the programme. It was expected that the Community Development Programme would be implemented by Rural Public, on their own.

Under the programme, the employees who were trained, were expected only to impart knowledge of new technology to the people and to induce them to implement the various action plans resulting in fruitful culmination of programme.

#### **4. LIMITED SUCCESS OF THE PROGRAMME**

What is the extent of success or failure of Community Development Programme? It is very necessary to dwell on this point. Numerous study papers and reports, evaluating the programme have so far been published. Number of scholars have come to the conclusion, that this programme had helped in large scale use and distribution of high yielding varieties of seeds, chemical fertilizers, pesticides/insecticides and modern agricultural implements. Similarly, it has been observed that new roads, wells, canals etc. have been constructed. Primary Health Centres, Rural Dispensaries, Kindergarten Schools were established. Thus, the programme has been able to achieve limited success, so far as it helped in bringing about socio-economic change in rural areas by supplying and producing the required resources. Rural economic system witnessed progress to some extent. Not only that, this programme also instilled a sense of awareness in rural population about the importance and necessity of such programme and made it more responsive to welfare measures.

However, failure of the programme outweighs this limited success. The expectation that the programme would bring about increase in agricultural production which in its wake would reduce rural poverty and unemployment, was belied. One of the reasons is, that increase in agricultural production was not projected as prime objective and due emphasis was not given on it.

Finance and other resources like tools etc. required for the purpose were not provided in adequate measure. Increase in agricultural production did not receive due and special attention, since efforts were directed to achieve multifacet progress. By the middle of 2nd Five Year Plan, it became quite evident that whatever be the success of the programme, it was necessary to introduce new concepts and strategies to ensure sufficient food grain production for ever increasing population. In 1957-58, the foodgrain production was 64 million tonnes, which was less by 5 million tonnes than 1953-1954 production. This has been admitted in the report of Balwantraoi Mehta Committee. As ill-luck would have it, India had to face the first acute drought after Independence. Therefore, the programme for increase in agricultural production, especially foodgrains had to be radically revised.

That, "Community Development Programme" could not achieve expected success

is due to the fact that the programme was entangled in the net of petty politics between local rural leadership and rich agriculturist class. The large share of funds made available for rural uplift, were grabbed by local influential people and the rich class, through medium of cooperative institutions, for their private gain. In consequence, majority of rural public, remained aloof from this scheme. No noticeable change was brought about in the selfish attitude and the control over resources of production, of the oppressive status-conscious leadership.

The then Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, accepted this fact, while addressing conference on Panchayat Raj at Delhi on 4-5-1989.

He said that though 'the Panchayat Raj' Institutions have been functioning over a period of 30 years, they have generally been ineffective, due to various reasons. Vested interests are also responsible for this failure.

'Community Development Programme' has been criticized also for its certain other drawbacks. The prominent are as follows :-

- (A) The initial concept that the programme was of the people and it was to be implemented by the people was, in practice, given a go-by. Bureaucrats and political leadership influenced and controlled the implementation process.
- (B) As there was no co-ordination between different departments, large number of untrained persons were recruited.
- (C) The enthusiasm and activeness expected on Extension Block level withered away. Programme, having thus lost its soul, became a mere ritual, displaying only a technical pattern. Formal functions of foundation laying, inauguration etc. themselves came to be regarded as goals.
- (D) Since there was no clear demarcation of functions of officers and staff on Extension Block level, much confusion was caused in implementation (4).

## 5. CAUSES OF FAILURE

Why the programme was unable to secure the anticipated success?

Some of the prominent reasons are cited below :

- (A) Workers of voluntary organizations and the political parties, committed to Rural Development became corrupt. As a result, the developmental activities envisaged in the programme, were implemented as per the dictum and under the control of administrative machinery. The totalitarian attitude of administration and the red-tapism were not conducive for effective execution of this socially - oriented programme. An unholy alliance of officials, rural rich (wealthy agriculturists) and influential political leaders was formed. Since all such persons had their own financial interest at stake, common people were pushed away from the programme, making it impossible to implement effectively various measures aiming at the rural socio-economic progress, though of course, some staff was an exception. Those employees did a good job and their efforts were visibly fruitful. But the programme, as a whole, got entangled in the web of technicalities and its appeal to common people for participation disappeared.

(B) Disparity prevalent in the present day rural communities, was another obstacle in effective implementation of Community Development Programme. Post independence period witnessed emergence of different classes viz. Rich belonging to higher social strata, leadership springing from this higher social strata, medium farmers and the landless labour which generally belonged to scheduled castes in Rural Social structure.

### **(B) Integrated Rural Development Programme**

The programme introduced by the Central Government for (1) ensuring all round development and progress of the lowliest downtrodden in Rural areas (2) stepping up the income of small and marginal farmers, peasants, agricultural and non-agricultural labour, rural artisans and people belonging to scheduled castes and tribes and (3) creating maximum employment opportunities, is called Integrated Rural Development Programme.

#### **1) Background and Commencement of Programme**

• In 1970-80, widespread poverty in Rural Areas was causing a lot of anxiety. Nearly 40% of the Rural families, were subsisting below poverty level. In this period national income as well as Rural Income had registered an increase. However, there was mal-distribution of this increased income. Those, who owned land or other means of production and those who possessed certain skills, were benefitted, as has been conceded by noted economists. Therefore, it was suggested that for eradication of poverty, rural poor had to be provided with some means of production and that they should be helped to acquire certain skills. Efforts were made in this direction in the 4th and 5th Plans. Programmes such as S.F.D.A. (Small Farmers Development Agency) and M.F.A.L. (Marginal Farmers and Agricultural Labour Development) were launched for this purpose but they did not achieve the desired goal. Therefore, revision of these measures were considered in 6th (Revised) Five Year Plan (1978-83). In the process the concept of the new Integrated Rural Development Programme was conceived and it was set in motion (5).

In 1978-79, the programme was introduced in 2300 Extension Blocks and was gradually implemented throughout the country by October (1980) (6). Initially, the programme was launched in 20 Districts, so selected as to be representative of all types and different levels of progress in the country. The programme was split in 2 parts -

- (a) To prepare budget of man-power requirements, means of production, resources etc. and to draw a financial plan for removing the regional imbalances.
- (b) To prepare special plans in respect of certain specific districts for solving their important problems and also to draw a time bound programme for implementation of developmental activities after deciding the policy.

Keeping these points in view the Integrated Rural Development Programme was finalised and the requisite plan of action was drawn.

Since 1966-67, the measures on extensive scale were initiated for bringing about, Green Revolution in selected regions. High yielding varieties of seeds, chemical

fertilizers and the use of modern technology were the corner stones of the programme. The objective was to achieve self-sufficiency in foodgrain and agricultural production. The results were visible by 1976-77. On the one hand prosperity enhanced but on the other poverty was not reduced. On the contrary, poverty and social disparity further widened. When number of researchers pin pointed this fact, Government ultimately decided that it was not just sufficient to register the growth, if it was not accompanied by social equity.

## **2) Central idea of I.R.D.P. and poverty line**

Central Idea of I.R.D.P. is related to the removal of twin problems of rural poverty and unemployment. It is possible to tackle the problems by accepting the need to start rural agricultural industries and other cottage industries. In rural areas, there is a dearth of skilled workers. Therefore, strategy was laid down of imparting training to unemployed and providing them with employment opportunities in rural areas under this Integrated Rural Development Programme. Emphasis was also given on the concept of self-employment. This action plan was complementary to agricultural development programme and it was felt that this would ease to some extent the situation arising out of paucity of skilled labour in rural areas.

Integrated Rural Development Programme has been recognised as an important segment of overall plan aiming at all round development of Rural areas. Need was felt to have a unified extensive programme throughout the country instead of having different programmes, being implemented in various regions through multiple agencies. This need was translated into action by launching the 'I. R. D. Programme'.

Based on the experience of various rural developmental programmes undertaken in post-independence period and keeping in view the small and marginal farmer, for whom developmental action plan had already been initiated, this Integrated Rural Development Programme was started in 1978-79. Financial assistance to a small/marginal peasant was not sufficient by itself to overcome the drawback in the developmental programme, tailored for him, as such assistance did not materially alter the situation in which he was placed. Therefore, it was found necessary to determine the extent of need of such beneficiary so that sufficient assistance could be given to him, enabling him to get increased income in times to come, which would in turn help him to cross over the poverty line once and for all. Poverty line was linked up to the income of Rs. 3,500/- for a family consisting of 5 members. This limit is based on the 1970-71 price index and on the assumption that in rural areas, a person needs 2400 calories. In the 6th plan also, this limit of Rs. 3,500/- has been recognised as poverty line. In the 7th Plan, this limit was raised to Rs. 6,400/-.

The programme envisages extending help by way of loan and subsidy to the extent of Rs. 5,000/- per family, after carefully selecting the families subsisting below poverty line. In identifying the families, proper attention would be given to their habitat (village groups), social strata and resources available to them. Idea is to enable such families to start their own vocations/professions making use of available resources, with the financial help to be received. Thus they would be assisted in crossing over the poverty

line. Their capacity of repaying the loan would increase and ultimately they would be able to stand on their own legs and will be saved from sliding down below the poverty line once again.

All these aspects were duly considered and taken care of in plans at Panchayat Samiti Levels. Shri Swaminathan suggested to safeguard the interests of the poorest of the poor, on priority basis.

### **3) Co - ordination and objectives of I.R.D.P.**

Experience had proved that in the absence of people's active involvement, any programme could not meet with desired success. The programmes are, therefore, now shaped against this background. Programmes differ in respect of their sphere, objectives, organisation, raising of finance, control and evaluation. It was noticed that implementation of a programme in different States did not conform to a set selected pattern. Therefore, idea of the people oriented programme was mooted. As a new technique of implementation of a programme, concept of management by objectives came forward. Such programme contemplated co-ordinated and maximum use of resources available in various spheres such as natural, human, cultural, social, institutional and political, for translating dream of development and progress into a reality. Accordingly, the programme was integrated to meet comprehensive needs of all sectors and spheres.

#### **Objectives**

- (i) To bring about progressive change in the socio-economic conditions of the poor.
- (ii) To provide loan and subsidy to rural poor family to enable it to earn continuous income by taking up productive activities.
- (iii) To encourage maximum use of all available local resources so that development programme would become self-reliant, to a large extent.
- (iv) To expand the activities, sphere of work and target.
- (v) To recognise family as a 'unit' under financial programme.
- (vi) To provide financial assistance to the 'units', as per their needs.
- (vii) To accelerate the pace of full employment programme in rural areas.
- (viii) To arrange to impart training to rural youth to enable them to pursue various vocations.
- (ix) To extend financial assistance for generating self-employment opportunities.

### **4) Development Action in the 7th Five year plan**

For each District, a five year development Plan of Action is drawn by the District Project Officer. It includes measures for increasing employment opportunities as well as income. Emphasis is laid, on such measures, which would contribute in improving the economic conditions of poor and weaker sections of society, particularly belonging to scheduled castes and tribes. While conducting a survey of families living under poverty line, due attention is paid in formulating such measures, which will fully utilize the available resources at local levels and increase their income.

**7th Five Year Plan (1985-90)** - Keeping in view the goal of reducing the percentage of families living under poverty line to 10% at the end of 8th Plan i.e. 1994-95, a

programme was outlined in the 7th Plan as under :-

- i) A provision for providing relief to 200 lakh families (including 66 lakh families belonging to Scheduled Castes and Tribes) was made. This provision amounted to Rs. 6,657.76 crores, out of which the contribution of Central Government was to the tune of Rs. 2657.76 crores and the balance of Rs. 4000 crores was to be provided by Banks.
- ii) Percentage of Women Beneficiaries was to be 30%.
- iii) Limit of poverty line was raised to the income level of Rs. 6,400/- from Rs. 3,500/-.
- iv) Those beneficiaries, who could not cross the poverty line, inspite of receiving financial assistance in 6th plan period were deemed to be eligible for receiving further aid.
- v) Uniform standards would be prescribed for distribution of aid and for determining targets, throughout the country.
- vi) Further needs of beneficiaries, who were recipients of aid would be constantly monitored.
- vii) Since the number of people living below poverty line, varied from State to State, percentage of such families to total families will be taken into account (i.e. to say, financial assistance would not be provided on the basis of assumed number of families).
- viii) As per the directions issued by National Agricultural and Rural Commission, it was decided to accord sanction for loan speedily, to extend the period of repayment of loan and to waive surety/guarantor in respect of loan upto Rs. 5,000/-.
- ix) Information relating to assistance to be given to beneficiaries duly identified, under provisions of the 7th Five Year Plan would be made available by Block Development Officers.
- x) In 22 regions, cash assistance would be provided to beneficiaries under Integrated Rural Development Programme.
- xi) Agricultural Development Plans would be drawn keeping in view overall village development programme. This will considerably help in creation of more employment opportunities.
- xii) Due care would be exercised to ensure that beneficiaries are able to get loan in time. Necessary instructions were issued for streamlining the process of sanctioning loans.

Ministry of Agriculture, Central Govt. had requested the State Governments to form consultative committees of beneficiaries at every village (Development Samiti). A sub-committee was to acquaint government machinery of the difficulties encountered. It would also give suggestions for overcoming these difficulties and also to enlighten the people about the advantages of the programme.

Integrated Rural Development Programme was started in 1978-79. Initially it was introduced in 2300 Extension Blocks and then it was extended throughout the country in 1980. Thus the programme has been in force for the last 10-11 years. Numerous studies regarding the total number of beneficiaries and the generation of employment

opportunities and various reports evaluating the programme are now available. Therefore, sufficient and authentic information is available. It is very difficult to come to any definite conclusion as regards the success or otherwise and also of the impact of the programme on rural social structure. However, the following issues raised by available studies, are quite noteworthy.

- (1) How many poor people were able to cross over the poverty line and to what extent the programme had been successful?
- (2) What was the scope and limit of the aid given under the programme? Whether undue stress was given in providing any particular type of production means?
- (3) Whether selection of beneficiaries was done in the right manner, who were the actual recipients of aid?
- (4) Whether implementation of programme, gave rise to corruption in Government Administration or at local level? If so what was its extent and manner?
- (5) What was the specific effect of the Integrated Programme on rural socio-economic structure?
- (6) What is the result (success/failure) of the programme?  
How many beneficiaries crossed the poverty line?

If we consider the poverty line at the level of annual income of Rs. 3,500/- or Rs. 6,400/-. the number of beneficiaries crossing the line can be ascertained by reference to Table No. 20

## **5. ERADICATION OF POVERTY AND EMPLOYMENT – HOW FAR**

According to some scholars, the contribution of Integrated Rural Development Programme in reduction of rural poverty is not discouraging though it was not as expected. On the basis of 32nd (1977-78) and 38th (1983-84) Rounds of N.S.S., C.H. Hanumant Rao has inferred that 13.5% of total population crossed the poverty line in rural areas. while in urban areas, the percentage was 7.8%.

However, Prof. Hanumant Rao has himself conceded that during the period 1977-78 and 1983-84, percentage in respect of scheduled castes and tribes is 7.6 and 7.1 only. It was 15.1% in respect of the rest of the population (8). Even if it is assumed that the conclusions drawn by Prof. Rao reflect the factual position, still it can be seen that in Developed States like Punjab, poverty was reduced only by 17.1% during the period from 1977 to 1983-84. Another important factor to be taken note of in this behalf, is that during the period from 1980-84, expenditure incurred on Integrated Rural Development Programme in Punjab was the largest when compared to that of other States. However, the number of families brought over the poverty line was not commensurate with the expenditure (9).

15 million people have been benefitted by the programme till the end of March 1985. About 20% of them might have crossed the poverty line, ultimate result being that only 3% of poor people all over India were able to cross the poverty line. It is not

Table No. 20

**PERCENTAGE OF PERSONS WITH INITIAL  
INCOME LESS THAN Rs. 3,500/- CROSSING THE POVERTY LINE**

| State             | Poverty Line<br>Rs. 3,500/- | Poverty Line<br>Rs. 6,400/- |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Andhra Pradesh    | 57.04                       | 7.16                        |
| Assam             | 53.46                       | 11.32                       |
| Bihar             | 42.18                       | 4.08                        |
| Gujarat           | 38.67                       | 4.42                        |
| Haryana           | 19.39                       | 0.00                        |
| Himachal Pradesh  | 52.70                       | 6.31                        |
| Jammu & Kashmir   | 50.57                       | 8.05                        |
| Karnataka         | 33.53                       | 3.59                        |
| Kerala            | 29.55                       | 2.27                        |
| Madhya Pradesh    | 35.15                       | 1.98                        |
| Maharashtra       | 40.78                       | 6.72                        |
| Manipur           | 14.02                       | 0.00                        |
| Meghalaya         | 20.00                       | 2.22                        |
| Nagaland          | 00.00                       | 00.00                       |
| Orissa            | 16.21                       | 1.19                        |
| Punjab            | 88.87                       | 15.97                       |
| Rajasthan         | 46.20                       | 7.26                        |
| Sikkim            | 40.00                       | 5.00                        |
| Tamil Nadu        | 31.61                       | 3.23                        |
| Tripura           | 45.95                       | 8.11                        |
| Uttar Pradesh     | 49.69                       | 4.63                        |
| West Bengal       | 47.42                       | 2.35                        |
| Union Territories | 33.46                       | 4.56                        |
| National Average  | 40.99                       | 4.60                        |

(7) | Source : E.P.W. 26 Dec. 87

About 41% of the eligible beneficiaries crossed the poverty line (Rs. 3,500/- annual income). The number of beneficiaries crossing the poverty line (Rs. 6,400/- annual income) is of course very small. (7)

certain, whether this income had remained stable after a period of 2-3 years, as drought conditions and diseases could have taken a heavy toll of cattle, sheep, goats etc. (sources of income) (10).

It can, therefore, be summarised that very poor families did not derive adequate benefits by this programme. A two pronged programme 'Work for needy' and 'Fair wages for work' is essential for eradication of poverty. Prof. Rath has observed that if employment opportunities are created on a large scale, then only the problem can be solved. This means that the programme has not helped in reduction of poverty, prevalent amongst traditionally weaker sections of the society, comprising of scheduled castes, tribes and backward classes.

Prof. Rajkrishna has also concurred with this view of Prof. Rath, that Integrated Rural Development Programme has brought very small or negligible benefit to rural poor (11). He has further observed that it was not certain that the income of families, who have crossed the poverty line as mentioned above, would remain stable.

The analysis made by Prof. Rath, poses two questions. Firstly, whether the scope of Integrated Rural Development Programme, should be limited and secondly whether the manner in which the existing National Rural Employment Scheme etc. are being implemented would be helpful in reduction of poverty, if so continued in the present form?

Whether it would be possible to achieve the ultimate goal of eradication of poverty? Smt. Indira Hirve has discussed the point and she came to the conclusion that the inference drawn by Prof. Rath is not entirely correct; as laying additional emphasis on creation of employment opportunities, would not solve the problem of poverty.

She is of the opinion that self-employment should not be given a secondary position in Rural Development. According to 32nd National Survey (32nd Round of N.S.S.) self-employment is the means of livelihood of 62% of rural work force. This includes the work force, engaged in Agricultural as well as Non-agricultural activities. Self-employment is primary and prominent means of livelihood in rural areas. Therefore, it would not be advantageous only to concentrate on employment on daily wages, side tracking 'self-employment' (12). In effect, it means, it is not sufficient to generate only the job opportunities where daily cash wage would be earned, for eradication of poverty. Instead, efforts be made to provide the beneficiaries, with such permanent means of production (Assets) as will help them earn constant income.

By creation of employment opportunities for earning wages, it becomes possible to build roads, dig wells, construct tanks, to do land levelling etc. However, who are going to be ultimately benefitted by these works? When these projects are in progress, poor people get wages but after completion of the works, only such people who own land or other means of production would receive permanent benefits. In the second stage e.g. Bunding work, tanks etc. would benefit only rich agriculturists. Landless labour would not have any share in the increased income.

International Labour Organization, has expressed the same view after conducting a study of 'Empolyment Guarantee Scheme' introduced in Maharashtra. Therefore, it

should be considered as to how, a share in the increased future income, can be passed on to landless labour. Keeping this in view the I. R. D. P. be continued after making suitable changes.

#### **6. DISTRIBUTION OF MILCH CATTLE AND CORRUPTION IN INTEGRATED RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME**

Integrated Rural Development Programme is at times criticised, describing it as nothing else but a scheme for distribution of cows, buffaloes, sheep and the sewing machines; since each block has been given a target in this respect. As per the guide line, 600 families are to be provided with means of income, during a year. For adhering to this norm, officials found out an easy way of supplying milch cattle etc. Such ridiculous measures have been criticised in a report, which points out that hundreds of cattle were supplied in a drought affected region ! (13)

Paul Sebrite, after conducting a study of some villages covered under Integrated Rural Development Programme, in Tamilnadu, came to the conclusion that those families who were given milch cattle under the programme derived lesser benefits than those, who bought the cattle through other resources. Even after taking into account the subsidy or rebate given under the programme, the beneficiaries got lesser benefits. The conditions of 50% of such beneficiaries, in fact, deteriorated since they had to bear the burden of loan availed of as the cattle purchased under the programme at high cost were of inferior breed and this brought about the deterioration (14).

There is much substance in the criticism that in the implementation of the programme, corruption, misdeeds, bribes creep in, on a large scale.

One of the extreme mode of corruption is e.g. the Govt. officials, who are entrusted with the task of implementation of programme and the concerned Bank officials join hands with beneficiaries, who immediately after they receive, sell the means of income viz. cows, buffaloes, etc. The amount of subsidy is then shared by all of them. The instances of this nature are no doubt few but in most cases, Bank Officers or Govt. officials, demand bribe from the beneficiary while sanctioning his application for aid or while supplying the means of income in the form of cattle etc. Majority of beneficiaries being illiterate, this is easily possible.

In purchase transactions of cows, buffaloes to be supplied to beneficiaries, palms of many persons are greased. The transport cost of the cattle is inflated by 25% to 30% (15).

An experience in Purnia District in this behalf is quite revealing. Under Integrated Rural Development Programme beneficiaries are issued identity cards, on production of which loan is sanctioned for purchase of cows, buffaloes etc. On number of occasions, rural rich people, unscrupulously get hold of identity cards of poor people and in collusion with Government and bank officials, get the loans sanctioned. Actually the loan amounts hardly reach the beneficiaries. In certain instances, it was even found that cows/buffaloes were never purchased but the transactions were shown only on paper. When high ranking officers came for inspection, it was reported that cows, buffaloes

purchased by poor families had died. On many occasions, veterinary officers and Insurance employees were also found to be involved in such corrupt practice of supporting such false contention.

Bharat Dogra has thrown light on ghastly plight of beneficiaries belonging to scheduled castes in Delhi, who were victims of such actions of the Transport Directorate. Almost all sheep and Goats supplied under the Programme to the beneficiaries in Palamu District in Bihar succumbed to diseases, driving the beneficiaries in debt trap (16).

A report of National Committee on the Development of Backward Classes 1981 (constituted by Government) points out that beneficiaries under the programme actually received 85% of the contemplated financial aid (inclusive of loan and subsidy) (17).

Even though the Committee report states so, beneficiaries actually receive, on number of occasions, unsuitable means of income, on account of incompetent administration, corruption and uncertainty in financial transactions. If some evidence is available in this connection, whether it would be possible to give some relief to beneficiaries, as is done in various loan schemes or whether unsuitable means can be replaced by suitable means? This and similar other points have to be considered in connection with the Integrated Rural Development Programme. Whether Government gives serious thought to the problem, is the crux of the issue.

Corruption and non-percolation of benefits to the poor are serious and basic drawbacks of the Programme. If the matter is considered in depth, it can be seen that the root cause for these ills, lies in the existing socio-economic system. Till this system undergoes radical change, these problems are bound to continue. Therefore, it is necessary to have a plan for total transformation of the present system.

## **7. BENEFICIARIES OF I.R.D.P. AND THEIR SELECTION**

The mistaken notions regarding criteria of eligibility for aid under this scheme gave rise to various impediments in the implementation of the programme. Guiding principle, that a family consisting of maximum 5 members whose income was less than Rs. 3,500/- p.a. would be eligible for and under the programme, was spelt out in 1980 but this is not being strictly adhered to. Annual income of Rs 3,500/- became the yardstick, irrespective of number of members in a family. In some States, no attention is paid to the total income of a family. In some other States, the area of land owned by an individual on extension block level is applied as a yardstick. It was enough if it was certified by the Revenue authorities that, particular individual was a small farmer. This short cut to eligibility criterion, gave more scope for corruption.

Findings of 4 studies evaluating the Integrated Rural Development Programme on National Level, have been published. According to the same, the percentage of persons, not eligible for aid, their income being above poverty line, is between 15% to 20% of total number of beneficiaries under the programme (18).

In this connection, the conclusions drawn in a study, conducted in Andhra Pradesh, deserve due attention. G. Hargopal and C.H. Balaraman, have summarised that the number of eligible beneficiaries and the number of actual recipients of aid under the

programme is very small. Similarly the contribution of this programme in eradication of poverty is quite negligible.

Another important conclusion is that the implementation of the programme was better in regions and districts, which had better facilities of water through dams, canals, irrigation system etc. This means that the rich who owned fertile land, having adequate water resources were benefitted more than the poor farmers.

They have also drawn an inference that the class of agricultural labour has been neglected and side tracked in the programme. (19).

### **Selection of Beneficiaries or Identifying the Beneficiaries**

As contemplated by administrative rules, regulations and guiding principles, final selection of beneficiaries is to be made by village Samiti. That the poorest should receive aid on priority basis under the programme is the underlying principle. Similarly it was also expected to prevent persons, who were not poor, from receiving aid by concealing their real income. However, in practice peoples' anticipated involvement and open selection did not take place.

Analysis of beneficiaries on National Level shows that 55% and 40% were selected by village Samitis and officials respectively and the rest 5% were selected as per the wishes of members of legislatures and Parliament. Officials made hundred percent selection in Assam and more than 75% in Bihar, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh and Tamilnadu (20). (Table No. 21 & Table No. 22 on page 105 and 106).

### **8. IMPACT OF INTEGRATED RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME.**

Numerous studies evaluating the I.R.D. Programme have been published. The main focus of the studies was to ascertain the number of families who had been able to spring up above the poverty line, with the aid of this programme. But the article published by Shri. V.M. Rao has given a new dimension to the evaluation of the programme. He has tried to assess the impact of poverty eradication programme on rural social structure and the nature of changes brought about. Possibly, Shri Rao had two objectives of the programme in mind. These being (A) Short term and immediate goal of eradication of poverty and (B) Long term goal of bringing about changes in Rural Social Structure.

According to Shri Dantwalla, the basic concept of Poverty Eradication programmes, should be bringing about reforms and changes in Rural Socio-Economic Structure (21). If such relationship between these two objectives does not exist, then all programmes would be restricted, to extend only temporary assistance. It may be expedient to render such temporary assistance as an immediate relief measure; but in the context of wider and total development of rural areas, any such programme, aiming at providing temporary relief, would fall far short of the target.

Therefore, it is imperative to draw such a plan of action and devise suitable measures in the existing Integrated Rural Development Programme, so that it would be conducive in achieving the basic objective of bringing about radical change in the present social structure.

Table No. 21

**STATEMENT OF BREAK UP OF  
SELECTION OF POTENTIAL BENEFICIARIES (in percentage)**

| STATE             | GRAM SABHA | OFFICIAL | OTHERS | TOTAL |
|-------------------|------------|----------|--------|-------|
| Andhra Pradesh    | 87         | 11       | 2      | 100   |
| Assam             | 0          | 100      | 0      | 100   |
| Bihar             | 18         | 77       | 5      | 100   |
| Gujarat           | 96         | 4        | 0      | 100   |
| Haryana           | 69         | 23       | 8      | 100   |
| Himachal Pradesh  | 95         | 5        | 0      | 100   |
| Jammu & Kashmir   | 80         | 20       | 0      | 100   |
| Karnataka         | 95         | 5        | 0      | 100   |
| Kerala            | 4          | 93       | 3      | 100   |
| Madhya Pradesh    | 10         | 85       | 5      | 100   |
| Maharashtra       | 39         | 52       | 9      | 100   |
| Manipur           | 57         | 43       | 0      | 100   |
| Meghalaya         | 75         | 20       | 5      | 100   |
| Nagaland          | 0          | 0        | 0      | 0     |
| Orissa            | 85         | 11       | 4      | 100   |
| Punjab            | 50         | 28       | 22     | 100   |
| Rajasthan         | 79         | 4        | 17     | 100   |
| Sikkim            | 100        | 0        | 0      | 100   |
| Tamil Nadu        | 1          | 89       | 10     | 100   |
| Tripura           | 98         | 2        | 0      | 100   |
| Uttar Pradesh     | 79         | 19       | 2      | 100   |
| West Bengal       | 100        | 0        | 0      | 100   |
| Union Territories | 65         | 26       | 9      | 100   |
| National Average  | 55         | 40       | 5      | 100   |

(20) Source : E.P. Weekly. Dec.26. 1987.

Table No. 22

## STATEWISE DISTRIBUTION OF INCOME AT THE TIME OF ASSISTANCE

(Percent of total at each level)

|                   | 1-<br>2,265/- | 2,266/- -<br>3,500 - | 1/- -<br>3,500/- | 3,500/- -<br>4,800/- | 1-<br>4800/- | 4,801/- -<br>6,400/- | 6,401/- | Total |
|-------------------|---------------|----------------------|------------------|----------------------|--------------|----------------------|---------|-------|
| Andhra Pradesh    | 55            | 40                   | 95               | 5                    | 100          | 0                    | 0       | 100   |
| Assam             | 9             | 42                   | 51               | 25                   | 76           | 7                    | 17      | 100   |
| Bihar             | 42            | 44                   | 86               | 8                    | 94           | 3                    | 3       | 100   |
| Gujarat           | 40            | 59                   | 99               | 1                    | 100          | 0                    | 0       | 100   |
| Haryana           | 37            | 32                   | 69               | 7                    | 76           | 10                   | 14      | 100   |
| Himachal Pradesh  | 48            | 47                   | 95               | 4                    | 99           | 1                    | 0       | 100   |
| Jammu & Kashmir   | 44            | 46                   | 90               | 4                    | 94           | 5                    | 1       | 100   |
| Karnataka         | 59            | 12                   | 91               | 7                    | 98           | 1                    | 1       | 100   |
| Kerala            | 29            | 35                   | 64               | 16                   | 80           | 11                   | 9       | 100   |
| Madhya Pradesh    | 38            | 53                   | 91               | 6                    | 97           | 2                    | 1       | 100   |
| Maharashtra       | 48            | 34                   | 82               | 12                   | 94           | 5                    | 1       | 100   |
| Manipur           | 80            | 20                   | 100              | 0                    | 100          | 0                    | 0       | 100   |
| Meghalaya         | 25            | 27                   | 52               | 21                   | 73           | 10                   | 17      | 100   |
| Orissa            | 81            | 19                   | 100              | 0                    | 100          | 0                    | 0       | 100   |
| Punjab            | 12            | 39                   | 51               | 40                   | 91           | 7                    | 2       | 100   |
| Rajasthan         | 26            | 32                   | 58               | 21                   | 79           | 7                    | 2       | 100   |
| Sikkim            | 45            | 35                   | 100              | 0                    | 100          | 0                    | 0       | 100   |
| Tamil Nadu        | 59            | 27                   | 86               | 9                    | 95           | 3                    | 2       | 100   |
| Tripura           | 33            | 30                   | 63               | 34                   | 97           | 3                    | 0       | 100   |
| Uttar Pradesh     | 18            | 54                   | 72               | 19                   | 91           | 5                    | 4       | 100   |
| West Bengal       | 27            | 48                   | 75               | 21                   | 96           | 3                    | 1       | 100   |
| Union Territories | 45            | 29                   | 74               | 16                   | 90           | 5                    | 5       | 100   |
| National Average  | 38            | 42                   | 80               | 12                   | 92           | 4                    | 4       | 100   |

Note : Data for Nagaland are not included. Union Territories include Arunachal Pradesh & Mizoram. 20A Source : E.P.W. Dec. 26 1987

### **9) Achievements and failures of I.R.D. Programme**

From the above discussion, it can be seen that though the programme did not meet with the expected success, still it has been successful to a limited extent. It is necessary to determine the extent of success in the achievement of desired goals and objectives, while evaluating any programme.

Objective of Integrated Rural Development Programme is eradication of poverty in rural areas. All programmes launched right from Community Development Programme till Integrated Rural Development Programme have generally attracted criticism, from different angles. One of the ground of general criticism, is that the benefits under almost all the programmes were pocketed mostly by rural rich and the people in power and the benefits did not reach the needy poor or the selection of beneficiaries was made on wrong basis. But from the foregoing, it can be inferred that the I.R.D. Programme has been successful to some extent. This is the first programme which is designed mainly for the rural poor and which aims at providing aid directly to this sector of the rural society.

### **(C) National Rural Employment Programme**

Numerous programmes had been launched with the aim of eradication of poverty such as Integrated Rural Development Programme etc. Amongst them, National Rural Employment Programme is of much importance. This was simultaneously launched with Integrated Rural Development Programme in 1978-79. This was not quite a new programme but was only a new edition of earlier ones, under new nomenclature. In 1970, crash programme for rural employment was initiated. Similarly programmes like 'Food for Work' etc. were in existence.

'Food for Work' programme was started in April 1977. The objective was to utilize the available food stock in the country, to save economically distressed weaker section of the society in rural areas from starvation deaths. Another objective of this programme was to utilize national resources for creating permanent assets in the interest of people at large. It was also designed as an effective measure of village development. It was also desired to provide some social security to the weaker sections. The programme also intended to provide the rural poor, with protection against twin calamities of unemployment and destitution on account of drought.

Though local unemployment is a State subject, still The Central Government also has to shoulder moral responsibility. Due to paucity of employment opportunities in villages, majority of landless, and the agricultural labour migrate to larger cities for livelihood. The ever increasing Shanty colonies in cities can be regarded as an extension of rural poverty. Cities are, therefore, faced with various problems like health, public hygiene, law and order etc. Therefore, Central Government is not in a position to neglect the problem. This programme of National Rural Employment was launched on national level, to combat the menace of rural poverty.

Various works were started under the programme e.g. construction of large, medium and small dams, erecting bunds for protection from floods, laying drainage pipes and storm water drains, afforestation, building of roads in rural areas, construction

of 'Panchayat' building, drinking water, increasing the water storage capacity of lakes by carrying out silt removing operations and other similar village development works. Necessary sanction for this was accorded by the Central Government and stocks of foodgrains were made available to State Governments at gratis (without any cost). The labour employed for these jobs, was to receive wages either full or in part, in the form of foodgrains. Panchayat Samitis, Village (Gram) Panchayats, Zilla Parishads and other voluntary organizations were free to participate in the programme. District collectors all over the country were empowered to allocate foodgrains upto 100 crore tonnes for distribution under this programme. (22)

### 1. OBJECTIVES OF THE N. R. E. P.

As mentioned above, the programme of 'Food for Work' was totally converted into 'National Rural Employment Programme' in 1978-79. The main objective of this programme is to provide auxiliary employment opportunities to poor in rural areas, especially by creating such jobs in lean season. The stress is on providing remunerative work to unemployed, or partly employed poor. It was intended to utilize the surplus stock of foodgrains in the country for creating more employment opportunities in rural areas, under 'Food for Work' programme.

On its conversion into 'National Rural Employment Programme', States are in a position to receive Central aid not only in the form of foodgrains but in cash also. Therefore, the State Governments are now able to start productive works of permanent nature. In the Central budget for 1980-81, provision of Rs. 440 crores was made for this programme. It was estimated that additional employment for 85 to 90 crore man-days could be created. It was estimated that 1000 needy poor in each Extension Block would be able to get work for at least 100 days in a year, during the 6th Plan period.

The position regarding the employment opportunities created during the period 1977-78 to 1980-81 under this programme, can be seen from Table below. Similarly resources utilised under FWP/NREP during the years 1977-78 to 1981-82 have also been shown in the table below.

**Table No. 23**

#### **EMPLOYMENT GENERATION FOR THE PERIOD 1978-79 TO 1981-82**

| Year    | Employment Generation Mandays in lacs |
|---------|---------------------------------------|
| 1977-78 | 444.34                                |
| 1978-79 | 3,552.32                              |
| 1979-80 | 5,817.10                              |
| 1980-81 | 3,264.98 *                            |
| 1981-82 | 201.49 *                              |

\* Information incomplete. (23) Source : New Face of India Page 341

Table No. 24

**STATEMENT SHOWING THE EMPLOYMENT GENERATED UNDER FOOD FOR WORK/N.R.E.P.  
DURING 1977-78, 1978-79, 1979-80 AND 1980-81**

| Name of the State/<br>Union Territory | Employment Generated<br>(in lakhs mandays) during |         |         |         | Period to<br>which relates |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|----------------------------|
|                                       | 1977-78                                           | 1978-79 | 1979-80 | 1980-81 |                            |
| Andhra Pradesh                        | —                                                 | 186.79  | 532.91  | 476.99  | Mar. 81                    |
| Assam                                 | 6.11                                              | 4.06    | 115.86  | NR      |                            |
| Bihar                                 | 14.76                                             | 641.42  | 753.39  | 280.74  | Dec. 80                    |
| Gujarat                               | —                                                 | 301.00  | 523.84  | 9.75    | Mar. 81                    |
| Haryana                               | —                                                 | 30.03   | 124.19  | 257.17  | Mar. 81                    |
| Himachal Pradesh                      | 0.70                                              | 2.72    | 43.47   | NR      |                            |
| Jammu & Kashmir                       | —                                                 | 10.99   | 29.83   | 28.90   | Dec. 90                    |
| Karnataka                             | 5.02                                              | 44.71   | 12.13   | NR      |                            |
| Kerala                                | 21.43                                             | 40.69   | 57.26   | 5.69    | Jun. 80                    |
| Madhya Pradesh                        | 44.00                                             | 450.00  | 456.02  | NR      |                            |
| Maharashtra                           | —                                                 | 143.00  | 499.12  | NR      |                            |
| Manipur                               | —                                                 | 143.00  | 499.12  | NR      |                            |
| Orissa                                | 68.69                                             | 362.39  | 552.27  | 294.06  | Dec. 80                    |
| Punjab                                | 0.14                                              | 49.93   | 32.28   | 6.40    | Dec. 80                    |
| Rajasthan                             | 6.87                                              | 500.74  | 400.35  | 154.75  | Dec. 80                    |
| Tamil Nadu                            | —                                                 | —       | 222.54  | 143.02  | Mar. 81                    |
| Tripura                               | —                                                 | 29.65   | 99.97   | 77.45   | Mar. 81                    |
| Uttar Pradesh                         | 58.19                                             | 223.32  | 819.52  | 479.36  | Sep. 80                    |
| West Bengal                           | 218.43                                            | 533.44  | 540.50  | 328.51  | Mar. 81                    |
| A & N Islands                         | —                                                 | —       | NR      | 2.55    | Jun. 80                    |
| Arunachal Pradesh                     | —                                                 | —       | 0.15    | 2.55    | Dec. 80                    |
| Mizoram                               | —                                                 | 2.00    | —       | NR      |                            |
| Pondicherry                           | —                                                 | —       | 1.50    | 1.17    | Dec. 80                    |
| Total                                 | 444.34                                            | 3556.88 | 5817.10 | 2546.81 |                            |

Table No. 25

**RESOURCES UTILISED UNDER FWP/NREP DURING THE YEARS 1978-79 TO 1981-82**

| Years   | Quantity of foodgrains utilised (M.Ts) | Cash fund utilised/(Rs. in lacs) |
|---------|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1977-78 | 1,29,835                               | ....                             |
| 1978-79 | 12,44,878                              | ....                             |
| 1979-80 | 23,76,130                              | ....                             |
| 1980-81 | 13,33,024*                             | 931.25*                          |
| 1981-82 | 53,697                                 | 3,167.81*                        |

★ Information incomplete.

Source : 23 (A) : New Face of India P. 341

## 2. EVALUATION OF THE N. R. E. P.

From the review of the programme, taken by Programme Evaluation Organization (PEO) of the Planning Commission, it is found that during the period from 1977-78 to 1983, out of the total number of beneficiaries under the programme, 50.6% were agricultural labourers. Out of these, 19.7% were totally landless agricultural labourers while 22.5% were farmers. Out of total beneficiaries, 42% belonged to scheduled castes and 13% to scheduled tribes. Another conclusion drawn, indicates that the rural people, on the whole, have been benefitted by the works executed under the programme e.g. road construction etc.

It has already been mentioned that under this programme, rural labour is assured of work for minimum period of 100 days. Whether they are paid wages at proper rate? The Report of Sub-Committee of the Parliamentary Advisory Committee attached to Labour Ministry, in this connection presents a dismal and distressing picture. The report states that the financial target set out for 1986-87 was fully achieved, in fact the accomplishment was 104%. The distribution and use of foodgrain was to the extent of 120% of the estimates, and the employment opportunities created were 140% of the targeted figure. It clearly means that the labour employed was not paid the minimum wages, at the rate assumed in estimated wage expenditure.

That the creation of employment opportunities, far exceeding the target, within the limited expenditure on wages is clear proof of the fact that labour employed was not paid wages at the minimum rate, determined by Government itself. Therefore, the subcommittee observed that the matter caused grave concern. Steps should, therefore, be taken for guaranteeing payment of minimum wages to labour employed under the programme (24).

When we attempt to evaluate the efficiency of the programme in providing employment opportunities to rural labour in times of their need, for the purpose of reducing their poverty, as was the objective, we see a dismal picture.

When we peruse interim report on this programme, the position regarding employment, as obtained, would be quite clear.

On the basis of the reviews and studies carried out, evaluating the programme, the interim report has expressed the following opinion.

"It has been evident that the employment provided to the labour under the programme was for a very short duration. Besides, the earnings arising out of the same were insufficient for maintenance of family of labour over the year. Therefore, the programme had no impact on the standard of living of rural poor. The rate of wages paid under the National Rural Employment Programme, were invariably less than the then prevalent rates. Selection of beneficiaries was not always done in proper manner, because the poorest of the poor, for whom the programme was formulated did not, on number of occasions, receive the intended benefits. While formulating action plan, needs of the local people, generally did not receive due attention, as commented upon by the sub-committee" (25).

Recently, various papers on National Rural Employment Programme have been

published. International Labour Organisation (ILO) has published its findings, after reviewing the process of implementation of the programme in States of Gujarat and Karnataka (26). Similarly Smt. Indira Hirve has published her findings after making a study of the programme in Gujarat State. (27).

The conclusion of both the above studies is that the programme no doubt provided employment opportunities to some for a short period but it contains no provision for providing employment opportunities of permanent nature over a long period. Besides, no appreciable change was brought about by the programme in the living standard of rural poor beneficiaries.

In Smt. Indira Hirve's opinion, this is due to three major reasons viz.

- (1) The concept and planning of the programme were ill - conceived. Not only that, but there is a clear indication of the absence of coherent and comprehensive thinking.
- (2) There were a lot of administrative difficulties.
- (3) Any development programme is always a victim of administrative incompetence. Clear and exhaustive guiding principles were not formulated to direct the implementation. This has led to the first drawback mentioned above.

Formulation of a programme, was not preceded by the study and estimate about the extent and the period of the administrative services, that would be available. It resulted in defective implementation, defeating the main objective of the programme. In the draft of 7th Five Year Plan, mention has been made of the objective, of eradication of poverty by 2000 A.D. For attainment of this objective, it is necessary to effect radical changes in the concept and the administrative services, after making indepth study of the various aspects mentioned above.

#### **(D) Maharashtra Employment Guarantee Scheme**

Employment Guarantee Scheme, introduced in Maharashtra is not only unique in the State but in the whole Nation, as it aims at accelerating the pace of wider programme of total eradication of poverty, besides creating employment opportunities. It has come as a boon to rural unemployed and the rural poor in general, who have been assured of employment. Many scholars have conducted studies of this scheme which has been in force in Maharashtra since 1972-73. International Labour Organisation has published some findings after conducting some surveys of the scheme. Therefore, it would be quite instructive to discuss the objectives, method of execution of this scheme and its impact on the socio-economic structure in rural areas.

Barring Konkan and larger portion of Vidarbha, Maharashtra is a drought-prone State. Some districts and almost 50% of taluks are always famine-stricken. In 1972, Maharashtra had to face severe drought. In rural areas, there was absence of work opportunities and the people became paupers. Number of cattle heads died for want of fodder and water. In consequence, there was a migration of rural poor on a large scale, from villages towards cities. This scheme was devised, that time, primarily with an objective of helping such drought-affected rural poor. However, to start scarcity works was not the only limited objective of the scheme. The main thrust of the scheme was to

undertake and complete developmental projects of permanent nature e.g. Roads, Canals, Percolating Tanks etc.

Employment Guarantee Scheme can therefore be rightly described as a suitably modified version of rural employment programme and the subsequent crash scheme in force since 1960. It has, however, to be noted that in the earlier schemes, no guarantee of employment was provided for. But Employment Guarantee Scheme, now launched, incorporates this unique feature. Central Government has directed other States to implement such socially - oriented schemes, on the lines of Maharashtra Scheme.

### 1. OBJECTIVES OF THE SCHEME

The Scheme was launched in pursuance of the Resolution passed by the Govt. of Maharashtra, on 28th March 1972. The main objective was to create gainful employment opportunities and to provide work to the needy in Rural Areas. It has been mentioned in the resolution that the scheme would strive to secure benefits for the society in general, besides providing employment to the needy. Government guaranteed under the scheme to provide work to any rural unemployed person and who was willing to work, provided he had not been able to secure job elsewhere.

The Resolution further recommended that the projects to be started under the scheme, should be capable of generating productive assets of permanent nature.

The objective of eradication of rural poverty by starting productive works, has been mentioned in the preamble of the scheme.

It, therefore, becomes clear that the scheme has two main objectives (a) To provide gainful employment to any rural unemployed willing to work, near his village and this guarantee indicates the creation of employment opportunities, (b) To produce, through such employment opportunities, means of future production. Both these objectives have been given equal importance.

A third objective has also been incorporated in the scheme since it has been duly recognized that distribution of income is also related to creation of employment opportunities. This objective aims at eradication of rural poverty by creating employment opportunities and guaranteeing work to the needy. As stated earlier, this has found a place in the Preamble of the Resolution of 1972. However, in the Maharashtra Employment Guarantee Act of 1977, emphasis has been laid only on the right of an individual to get work. It has been mentioned that under Article 41 of Indian Constitution, a needy person willing to work has a right to get work and to protect this right, the scheme gives guarantee of work to such persons. No reference, however, has been made in regard to eradication of poverty but in practice the Government Administration has assumed existence of such objective. It would, therefore, be a mistake to ignore this third objective: otherwise distortion in economic system would spring up. It would also lead to undertaking short-term projects only. Permanent economic rehabilitation of unemployed would continue to be a mirage, as other long term programmes aiming at bringing the rural poor into the main economic stream would be relegated backwards. (28)

## **2. MAIN PROVISIONS AND SPECIAL FEATURES**

Rules and Regulations of the Scheme were formulated in 1977. After receiving assent of the President of India, the Act came into force on 1.10.1978. Under the Act, guarantee of work has been given to any adult person in Maharashtra and he has also been given the right to receive wages for such work every week or at least not later than every fortnight.

### **Committees**

To advise the State Government on the effective implementation of Employment Guarantee Scheme, from time to time, Committees are to be appointed on (a) State level, (b) District level and (c) Panchayat level. Appointment of persons belonging to scheduled castes/tribes to fill 2 vacancies and of agricultural labourers actually engaged in work or of office-bearers of registered unions/associations to fill 2 vacancies on the committees, is made obligatory.

District Collector will be solely responsible for the implementation of the scheme in District and other officials in the District would be responsible to him.

### **Special features of the Scheme**

- (1) Every adult man/woman in the rural area of the State has been conferred the legal right to ask for work.
- (2) If one applied for the job in the prescribed form and if work is not provided to such applicant within 15 days, such eligible unemployed person would be entitled to demand unemployment allowance at the rate of Rs. 2/- per day.
- (3) Special provision for giving 'Food for Work'.
- (4) In case of accident or death, while engaged on work, provision for ex-gratia payment.

## **3. WORK ON DEMAND AND FACILITIES TO LABOURERS**

Person intending to get work under the scheme has to register his name with the village Gramsevak or Talathi and obtain Identity Card, which should bear his/her photograph. Application for work should be made in prescribed form No. 4 to the Gramsevak/Talathi or to the Tahasildar, empowered to register the names. In case, no work is provided within 15 days from the date of the application, application for unemployment allowance should be made to the concerned authorities in prescribed form No. 8. Allowance would not be payable if the application is not so made.

The labourers employed on works started under Employment Guarantee Scheme have to be provided with the following amenities and facilities :-

- (1) Every day, when a worker is present on work, he/she is to be given a coupon for foodgrain of 1 kg 400 gms. A sum of Rs. 1.55 would be deductible from wages towards this facility.
- (2) Drinking water has to be provided at the site of work. Similarly sheds for rest should be constructed.
- (3) Necessary first aid equipment should be available if worker sustains injury while engaged in work.

- (4) Baby-creches to be made available for children of women workers.
- (5) In case, labourer uses his own tools, 20 paise per day as hiring charges and 30 paise per day for sharpening charges per tool, are to be paid.
- (6) In case of accident arising out of and in the course of his duty, free medical aid is to be given. If worker is admitted in a hospital, he will be entitled to half of the daily wages.
- (7) In case of worker's death, while engaged on work, his legal heirs are paid a sum of Rs. 5,000/- as ex-gratia payment.
- (8) If a woman worker has worked for minimum of 150 days in a year and if her confinement (delivery) is to take place in near future, she is entitled to 1 month's leave on full wages during such period.
- (9) A female, who undergoes family planning operation, is entitled to 14 days leave for rest while a male undergoing such an operation is entitled to 7 days leave for rest. Full wages for such leave period, are paid as ex-gratia payment.
- (10) Labourers who are engaged in work at sites 5 km and further away from their place of residence, are provided with huts at the site of work for temporary residence.

#### **4. RULES RELATING TO WAGES AND COMPLAINT**

- (1) At every site of work, table of rates of wages should be prominently displayed. The rate of wages should be according to Government directions.
- (2) Bombay High Court has ruled in 1984 that for 7 hours work put in by a labourer, the minimum wages for a day to which an agricultural labourer in that region is entitled to, will be payable. This ruling is to be strictly adhered to.
- (3) Measurements of the work done by labourer during a week (excavation or otherwise) be taken and certificate be issued to him.
- (4) Labourers are required to carry material upto a distance of 150 meters. Additional compensation is paid for this transport.
- (5) Hiring charges for his own tools used by him are paid extra.

Any complaint regarding Employment Guarantee Scheme is to be lodged with Tahasildar, Sub-Divisional Officer, Collector or the concerned department, in writing.

#### **5. ADMINISTRATION OF THE SCHEME**

Administration (Implementation) of the scheme is to be viewed from three angles.

- (a) Planning for employment (target) opportunities
- (b) Selection of Projects to be started and
- (c) its contribution to or impact on eradication of rural poverty.

While planning for employment target, it would be necessary to ensure that the labour engaged in agriculture or in other governmental work would not be allowed to get work under the Scheme. For that purpose, a blue print to show the exact statistical information relating to number of workers to be covered under the scheme in off season and the number and nature of projects to be started to provide work to such workers in such times, would have to be drawn out. Another point is to prepare a comprehensive chart to determine the number of labourers who could be provided work on the projects

on hand and the new ones, contemplated for. Third factor is to make near perfect estimates relating to number of labourers, who would be demanding jobs under the scheme. This is besides the number of labourers, presently engaged in on-going projects.

However, one of the major drawbacks in the execution of the scheme is that proper estimate relating to anticipated demand of employment is never made (29).

A twin criteria for determining the selection of projects to be started under the scheme, has been laid down. The first criterion is concerned with providing work to maximum number of labourers on the projects to be started (Labour Intensive) while the second one underscores the need to ensure increase in production by such projects. In the Employment Guarantee Act of 1977, productive work has been defined as follows

“The work, which contributes directly or indirectly in increasing the production or which, if not started, will be an obstacle in increasing production is deemed to be ‘Productive Work’. However, this yard-stick of productive work is not so useful or practical; since it is not so easy to apply any yard-stick to measure correctly the increased production. And such criterion or yard-stick is not in existence at present.

Details of the works sanctioned and those completed since the introduction of the scheme till September 1981, can be ascertained from Table No.26 on page 116

From the above details, it is noticed that while selecting the works to be started under the scheme, the thrust of the government is towards small Irrigation Projects, Soil Conservation and Roads construction. Comparatively, afforestation and Medium and Large size irrigation projects have not received much preference. Estimated Expenditure figures also indicate this position.

## 6. WHO PAYS FOR AND GAINS FROM THE SCHEME

For raising the funds to finance the scheme, Government of Maharashtra, has devised a special tax structure. The amount is collected from urban areas; through six tax measures, as shown below:

- (1) Professional Tax
- (2) Additional Vehicle Tax
- (3) Excess Sales Tax
- (4) Additional Land Revenue
- (5) Levy on land under cultivation
- (6) Tax on unremovable non residential properties in urban areas.

The total tax collection is matched by equal contribution by State Government. The total funds are credited in a separate account of ‘Employment Guarantee Scheme’. These funds are utilized only for meeting the expenditure under this scheme. Statistics in the table no 28 (on page no 117) give us an idea of the funds available of this scheme (32)

It can be seen that in 1975 - 76, a sum of Rs. 10.33 crores was collected by way of Profession Tax. This figure shot upto Rs. 33.23 crores in 1981 - 82. This is the largest source of the funds required for employment Guarantee Scheme. In 1981 - 82, the collection of profession tax registered an increase of Rs. 16.82 crores i.e. to say it was doubled.

Table No. 26

**NUMBER AND VARIETY OF WORKS UNDER EMPLOYMENT  
GUARANTEE SCHEME TILL SEPTEMBER, 1981**

| Nature of work                            | No. of works sanctioned | No. of works completed |
|-------------------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Large Irrigation Projects              | 2782                    | 1948                   |
| 2. Medium Irrigation Projects             | 545                     | 236                    |
| 3. Small Irrigation Projects              | 2353                    | 835                    |
| 4. Small Tanks/Reservoirs                 | 6813                    | 2636                   |
| 5. Other Small Irrigation Projects        | 6226                    | 4574                   |
| 6. Soil Conservation                      | 53114                   | 38286                  |
| 7. Land Development                       | 11459                   | 6521                   |
| 8. Afforestation and other ancillary jobs | 4125                    | 1277                   |
| 9. Roads                                  | 10919                   | 3394                   |
| 10. Other Works                           | 5349                    | 3508                   |
| Total                                     | 103685                  | 63215                  |

(30) Source : E.P.W. 1982 Vol. 2. Page 1227

It will be seen that out of 103685 works sanctioned 63,215 have been completed till September 1981. The percentage of works completed is roughly 62 - 63%

Percentage of expenditure incurred on the scheme till March 1981 and the estimated expenditure in 1980-85 is shown in the following Table

Table No. 27

**PATTERN OF EXPENDITURE UNDER EMPLOYMENT GUARANTEE SCHEME**

| Nature of works                      | % of Cash expenditure till Mar.81 | Estimated Expenditure (in crores of Rs.) |         |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------|---------|
|                                      |                                   | 1982-83                                  | 1980-85 |
| Large and medium irrigation projects | 8.2                               | 5.3                                      | 40.00   |
| Small Irrigation Projects            | 34.7                              | 20.8                                     | 125.00  |
| Soil Conservation                    | 19.1                              | 14.4                                     | 143.00  |
| Land Development                     | 7.6                               | 8.0                                      | 60.00   |
| Afforestation and ancillary jobs     | 5.1                               | 4.0                                      | 30.50   |
| Roads                                | 23.3                              | 16.08                                    | 130.00  |
| Total                                | 98.00                             | 68.58                                    | 528.50  |

(31) Source: E.P.W. 1982 Vol. 2 Page 1227

Table No. 28

**FUNDS COLLECTED FROM URBEN AREAS FOR EMPLOYMENT GUARANTEE SCHEME**

(In crores of Rupees)

|    | <b>Tax/Levy</b>                                                    | <b>1975-76</b> | <b>1976-77</b> | <b>1977-78</b> | <b>1978-79</b> | <b>1979-80</b> | <b>1980-81</b> | <b>1981-82</b> | <b>1982-83</b> |
|----|--------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| 1. | Profession Tax                                                     | 10.33          | 17.89          | 18.47          | 19.61          | 23.47          | 32.11          | 33.23          | 39.93          |
| 2. | Excess Sales Tax                                                   | —              | 8.45           | 16.26          | 10.11          | 11.22          | 16.80          | 16.82          | 21.87          |
| 3. | Additional vehicle tax                                             | 0.10           | 0.80           | 0.90           | 1.33           | 0.88           | 1.44           | 1.46           | 1.57           |
| 4. | Land Revenue (Additional)                                          | 0.06           | 0.07           | 0.09           | 0.25           | 0.20           | 2.29           | 2.29           | 2.29           |
| 5. | Levy on land under Cultivation                                     | —              | 0.17           | —              | 0.10           | —              | —              | —              | —              |
| 6. | Tax on unremovable<br>non-residential<br>properties in Urban areas | —              | —              | 0.08           | —              | 0.63           | 4.90           | 4.52           | 5.04           |
|    | <b>Total Taxes + Levy</b>                                          | <b>10.49</b>   | <b>27.38</b>   | <b>35.80</b>   | <b>31.40</b>   | <b>36.40</b>   | <b>57.04</b>   | <b>58.32</b>   | <b>70.70</b>   |
|    | <b>Govt. contribution</b>                                          | <b>10.49</b>   | <b>27.38</b>   | <b>34.46</b>   | <b>31.40</b>   | <b>36.40</b>   | <b>57.04</b>   | <b>58.32</b>   | <b>70.70</b>   |
|    | <b>Grand Total</b>                                                 | <b>20.98</b>   | <b>54.76</b>   | <b>70.26</b>   | <b>62.80</b>   | <b>72.80</b>   | <b>114.08</b>  | <b>116.64</b>  | <b>141.40</b>  |

(32) Source. : E.P.W. 1982 Vol. 2 Page 1227

## 7. BENEFITS ACCRUE TO RICH AGRICULTURIST

It is a startling revelation that, no tax has been collected from the owners of land under irrigation, for this scheme. The collection of Tax levied on lands under irrigation in 1976-77, 1977-78 and 1978-79 amounted to Rs. 17 lakhs, Rs. Nil and Rs. 19 lakhs respectively. In the next 3 years (from 1979-80 to 1981-82) no amount was collected through tax for Employment Guarantee Scheme from rich and influential agriculturists and Bagaitdars! As a matter of fact rich landlords/agriculturists got irrigation facilities automatically and without any cost on account of various irrigation projects completed under this scheme. Thus they had the advantage of securing permanent means for increasing their production. Since this class supports the people in power, politically, no attempt is made for collection of taxes from them!

A joint committee of Maharashtra and Central Government while evaluating the scheme, has also expressed similar opinion. In its report, it had stated,

“The projects undertaken under the Employment Guarantee Scheme have brought more benefits to big Landlords Zamindars/Bagaitdars than those to small farmers (owning upto 2 Hectares of land) or the landless agricultural labour”. (33)

In this connection, if we have a look at the project of constructing percolating tanks under the scheme, we find that this has also benefitted the big landlords. Agriculturist has to sink wells at great cost, for reaping the benefits of the said project. Small and marginal farmers are not able to dig wells in their fields, unless loan is made available to them. Rich farmers can easily do so and as such they derive more benefits.

International Labour Organisation has published a summary report on Employment Guarantee Scheme in 1978. It has drawn certain conclusions regarding recipients of benefits and the extent of benefits so derived. The projects under Employment Guarantee Scheme, were scrutinized in two stages. First being the construction phase of the project and the second one being post completion period. In the first stage when the work is in progress, workers get the benefits for that period, in the form of wages. After completion of the project, the landlords and especially rich farmers receive permanent recurring benefits.

In the report, comments have been made on the irrigation projects undertaken to provide adequate water supply. It has been pointed out that, if the contemplated expenditure is Rs. 1 lakh, during the first stage, when the work is in progress, landless labour would receive Rs. 18,000/- while small farmers would get Rs. 61,000/-.

After completion of the project, big landlords would receive Rs. 52,000/-, small farmers Rs. 10,000/- and workers on daily wages Rs. 12,000/- ! That means that big landlords/Bagaitdars would receive more benefits in the end than the landless and rural poor having no assets for whom this scheme was designed.

Regarding Soil Conservation works, it has been observed in the report, that after completion of the work, big landlords/Bagaitdars would benefit to the extent of Rs. 3,86,000/- while small farmers and labour would get only Rs. 34,000/- and Rs. 99,000/-

respectively ! Projects, other than soil conservation, generally benefit landless agricultural labour, as per another observation made in the said report. (34).

It is seen that, weaker sections of the society, have been benefitted to some extent by the Employment Guarantee Scheme. Landless Labour comprises the major portion of weaker sections in the society. The number of workers from weaker section of the rural society benefitted by this scheme will be seen from the Table No 29 (on page no 120) (34 A).

They stand on the lowest rung of the ladder in the present socio-economic hierarchy. Unemployment and partial unemployment are the root causes of their poverty. Since they have been able to secure some employment, under the Employment Guarantee Scheme, they got relief from the clutches of dire poverty.

The percentage of workers from weaker sections, able to work and percentage of those working on Employment Guarantee Scheme in 1977-78 are given in the Table No. 29 (34B).

In the period of 10 years from 1978, capital expenditure amounting to Rs. 2100 crores has been incurred on Employment Guarantee Scheme. That has, certainly brought about some favourable change in rural employment position. According to some scholars, if this scheme is not studied in isolation but in the wider context of rural development and social change, a totally different picture emerges. They have noted that during the period from March-April to May-June, about 10 lakh labourers used to be engaged on works under the Scheme, in the beginning. This number later on dwindled down to 5 lakh. It indicates that the number of labour gradually decreased. The reason put forward is that the labour working under this scheme, turned to other jobs, in large number. These other jobs include agricultural work, digging wells, removing silt, work in salt pans, painting etc.

This leads to an inference that the demand for mass scale employment opportunities under this and like schemes, decreased. Even this was deemed to be a healthy sign of changing and prospering economy. (35)

However, this inference is not supported by facts. It is a case of oversimplification of facts. Even today, we come across numerous groups of rural poor moving towards the towns and cities and Tahsil offices in search of work during the months from March-April to May every year. This scheme provides them with work for 180 days a year on an average. The experience of Krishi Mazdoor Sangh in Buldhana District, in this regard, is diagonally opposite. Lethargy in offices, corruption amongst officials and ignorance of rural poor and such other causes, prevent the needy from getting work at right time, under this Scheme. Active workers of the Sangh, therefore, feel that the scheme should be made more dynamic and competent. (36).

To summarise, it may be said that Employment Guarantee Scheme in Maharashtra, which has been in force for such a long time and which has been providing employment opportunities to rural poor, though on a limited scale, is a model scheme in the nation. For bringing about changes on wider scale in the rural socio-economic structure, the scheme needs to be further strengthened.

Table No. 29

**NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF WORKERS FROM WEAKER SECTIONS AND NUMBERS WORKING ON EMPLOYMENT GUARANTEE SCHEME IN VARIOUS DISTRICTS IN 1977-1978**

| District   | Total number of Talukas | Number of Drought Prone Talukas | Total of working age population from weaker section 1978 | Average labour attendance on E.G.S. (1978) | Percentage of working age population from weaker sections on Employment Guarantee Scheme (Nov. 1977 to Oct. 1978) |
|------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (1)        | (2)                     | (3)                             | (4)                                                      | (5)                                        | (6)                                                                                                               |
| Thane      | 13                      | —                               | 158638                                                   | 30513                                      | 19.23                                                                                                             |
| Kulaba     | 14                      | —                               | 104167                                                   | 1919                                       | 1.84                                                                                                              |
| Ratnagiri  | 15                      | —                               | 143080                                                   | 696                                        | 0.49                                                                                                              |
| Nasik      | 13                      | 9                               | 188037                                                   | 43200                                      | 22.97                                                                                                             |
| Dhulia     | 10                      | 6                               | 174701                                                   | 20626                                      | 11.81                                                                                                             |
| Jalgaon    | 13                      | 8                               | 233459                                                   | —                                          | 3.91                                                                                                              |
| Ahmednagar | 13                      | 13                              | 177484                                                   | 45427                                      | 25.59                                                                                                             |
| Sangli     | 8                       | 6                               | 105140                                                   | 10345                                      | 9.84                                                                                                              |
| Pune       | 14                      | 9                               | 138187                                                   | 12486                                      | 9.04                                                                                                              |
| Satara     | 11                      | 6                               | 123388                                                   | 7313                                       | 5.93                                                                                                              |
| Solapur    | 11                      | 11                              | 163553                                                   | 53249                                      | 32.56                                                                                                             |
| Kolhapur   | 12                      | 2                               | 151465                                                   | 829                                        | 0.55                                                                                                              |
| Aurangabad | 12                      | 7                               | 172334                                                   | 27810                                      | 16.14                                                                                                             |
| Parbhani   | 8                       | —                               | 158585                                                   | 31006                                      | 19.55                                                                                                             |
| Beed       | 7                       | 6                               | 113045                                                   | —                                          | 13.88                                                                                                             |
| Nanded     | 8                       | —                               | 136788                                                   | 12367                                      | 9.04                                                                                                              |
| Osmanabad  | 11                      | 5                               | 171751                                                   | 25415                                      | 14.80                                                                                                             |
| Buldhana   | 5                       | 2                               | 174887                                                   | 2331                                       | 1.33                                                                                                              |
| Akola      | 6                       | —                               | 222455                                                   | 3974                                       | 1.79                                                                                                              |
| Amravati   | 6                       | —                               | 226249                                                   | 1388                                       | 0.61                                                                                                              |
| Yeatmal    | 5                       | —                               | 218363                                                   | 8616                                       | 3.85                                                                                                              |
| Wardha     | 3                       | —                               | 97655                                                    | 2996                                       | 3.07                                                                                                              |
| Nagpur     | 5                       | —                               | 128708                                                   | 6550                                       | 5.01                                                                                                              |
| Bhandara   | 3                       | —                               | 164395                                                   | 12637                                      | 7.69                                                                                                              |
| Chandrapur | 6                       | —                               | 239696                                                   | 7276                                       | 3.04                                                                                                              |
| Total      | 232                     | 90                              | 4086210                                                  | 393704★                                    | 9.63                                                                                                              |

★ The corresponding figure for the State as a whole was given as 386,000 by the Planning department.

The objectives of Employment Guarantee Scheme are eradication of poverty and securing long term benefits for the weaker sections. When the work on projects under the scheme, was in progress, rural poor and unemployed got the employment to some extent. But the reports of various committees and scholars reveal altogether different reality.

A worker gets the work for 90 to 120 days on an average. Wage received is not sufficient for sustenance of a family. Recurring benefits arising out of various programmes of irrigation, soil conservation, construction of roads etc., executed at the cost of Government, accrue permanently to rich agriculturists/Bagaitdars in rural area. Employment Guarantee Scheme has given a rise to a paradoxical situation in as much as it has brought lesser benefits for weaker section, mainly for whom the scheme was introduced, while the rich Bagaitdars, who are expected to make some sacrifice by paying taxes for the upliftment of weaker section of society, have instead been benefitted more.

In rural areas, the majority of the workers demanding employment under the scheme, is of agricultural labour. Instead of getting the benefits, as intended, they are denied the same. When they become conscious of the facts that they are treated as neglected and exploited class, they take resort to organise agitations and struggles.

A review of such movements struggles launched by agricultural labour in India is taken in the next chapter.

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## *Chapter IV*

### **AGITATIONS AND STRUGGLES BY AGRICULTURAL LABOUR**

After Independence, Indian National leaders had to face a stiff challenge of finding a solution to the problem of economic and social miseries of rural poor. It was felt that rural poor must be involved in national development process in a dedicated & active manner but at the same time their demands and aspirations should be kept within certain limits. Counter balancing of these two pulls was the main task. It was the general apprehension that if the aspirations of rural poor were speedily and hastily politicised, then it would be quite impossible to fulfil such aspirations within the frame-work of existing political set up and as a result, country would be exposed to a situation of total anarchy.

All Congress Leaders including Padit Jawaharlal Nahru were of the opinion that a gradual peaceful evolution should be attempted to bring about indirectly a change in the then existing established socio-economic system in rural India instead of resorting to revolutionary methods. So that there would not be anarchy and economic benefits would accrue to rural poor. This process, they believed, would also help in ushering in new rural responsible leadership.

Adhering to these principles, all development programmes were formulated. As a consequence, agricultural labour occupying the lowest strata of socio-economic structure got an opportunity to secure equal democratic rights.

Adoption of principle of Universal Suffrage and creation of local self institutions like Panchayat Raj, further enhanced the importance of this class, as their right to vote had by now achieved a higher weightage. On account of spread of education in rural areas, the people occupying the lowest rung of the social structure, became aware of their democratic rights. Protective provisions for the welfare of the scheduled castes and tribes were incorporated in the Indian Constitution, framed under the able direction of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar. Seats were reserved for these classes, in Parliament, State Legislature and to some extent in local self Institutions. Reservation of jobs in Central and State Government services, facilities in educational field, Bonded Labour Abolition Act; Removal of Untouchability Act, development programmes for tribal areas, helped to an extent in creation of awareness and self-confidence in the downtrodden class.

With a view to bring about a beneficial change in socio-economic structure in rural areas, new Agrarian Policy was adopted after independence.

Another objective was to do away with the system of idle middlemen who swallowed the agricultural income, depriving the poor labourers who actually tilled the land, of their rightful share. Measures undertaken in this direction include abolition of Zamindari-Jahagirs Acts, enforcement of the Land Ceiling Acts, Tenancy Acts and other land reform acts. This in its wake, to some extent, brought about a change in

socio-economic relationship between different constituents in rural areas, giving rise to three new classes viz. (1) Rich Agriculturist, (2) Medium Land Holder (peasant), (3) Landless Agricultural Labour, Unemployed Educated artisans, Bataidars and generally exploited down-trodden class in rural areas. The emergence of these classes was instrumental in creation of tension and strife in rural social structure.

On the one hand big and medium landholders, launched struggles for getting higher price for agricultural produce, to secure benefits for them, and on the other, exploited downtrodden and landless labour started movements for getting land for their economic uplift.

A brief review of the second type of above mentioned struggles/movements in the twilight period of Independence as well as post-independence period is taken in this Chapter.

Influence and importance of Agricultural Labour as a class came to be recognized at the end of decade 1960-70 and at the beginning of decade 1970-80. Measures undertaken in execution of new agrarian policies and programmes to bring about green revolution by securing a huge increase in agricultural production by using high yield variety of seeds and the chemical fertilizers, resulted in the recognition of great importance of Agricultural Labour as a class.

Even though the existence and united strength of this class of Agricultural labour came to be duly recognised since 1960, agricultural labour had earlier actively participated in the political and economical movements launched by the peasants. The roots of struggles and movements of Agricultural labour can be traced to peasant movements.

### **(A) Peasents Movements before independence**

Communists claim that they are pioneers of peasant movements in India but this is not true (1). Till 1935, their activities were restricted to Industrial labour and generally communists did not tackle the problems of agricultural labour. In the year 1923-24 after Kanpur conspiracy case, for political expediency, Indian Communists associated themselves with Peasant Movements, as per the advice of Comintern (Russia) and Manavendra Nath Roy (2). Number of other leaders had earlier started creating a sense of awareness in the minds of peasants. In the latter part of 19th century, Mahatma Phule, obtained signatures of peasants on the petition denouncing the oppressive measures resorted to by Money-lenders and zamindars against poor peasants in Maharashtra and also launched Boycott Movement (1885). Other movements like the one in Avadh in Uttar Pradesh (1920) 'No Tax Movements' in Raibareilly (1921) under the leadership of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Convention of Agricultural labour in Andhra (1923) were also launched. Upto 1927 such organisations were established in the States of Pubjab, Bengal and Uttar Pradesh.

#### **1. AKHIL BHARATIYA KISAN SABHA**

As mentioned above, small peasants organisations came into existence in various

States. However, Peasants' Organisation on National level was founded at Lucknow on 11th April, 1936, which was styled as A.B.K. Sabha. Some Congress leaders including Swami Sahajananda Saraswati, and communists were the founder leaders of the said Organisation. This Organisation gradually gained momentum. Rich peasants and also the landless agricultural workers were the members of the Kisan Sabha. It is, however, to be noted that rich landlords, middle class farmers and the tenants were more influential. Swami Sahajanada later admitted this fact.

In the first Conference of Akhil Bharatiya Kisan Sabha in 1936 many resolutions on political and economic situation were passed along with the resolution regarding the agricultural workers. The main demands in the said resolution were as follows :-

- (a) The unjust system of illegal recovery from the agricultural labour under the then obtaining feudal system should be stopped.
- (b) Abolition of bonded labour system.
- (c) The provisions of the Minimum Wages Act and The Workmen Compensation Act should be made applicable to agricultural worker(3).

After the II<sup>nd</sup> World War (1945) Independence of Bharat came into sight. At that time, the peasant movement gradually became militant. Armed struggles were also launched. Amongst these movements, the Tebhag Movement in Bengal, and the armed struggle launched by the agriculturist and the agricultural workers in Andhra Pradesh were very prominent.

## **2. TEBHAG MOVEMENT (1946-47)**

In the twilight period of Independence, number of peasant movements were launched in other parts of India, besides Telangana. These were directed against feudalism of Big Zamindars. Likewise, efforts were made to solve the problems of small farmers, Bataidars and Agricultural Labour in similar movements. Though not of the magnitude of Peasant Struggles in Telangana, 'Tebhag Movement' launched in Bengal was one of the major struggles. In 1946-47, this movement was launched by Bengal Kisan Sabha i.e. by the Communists.

This struggle was related to 'Baragdars or Bataidars' in Bengal. Bataidars were then required to pay half the share of produce to 'Jotedars' (Rich Peasants). In this process 'Bataidars' were fully exploited. Even after parting with this half share, they were compelled to pay some portion of the remaining produce by way of repayment of debt, cost of seeds etc. provided by 'Jotedars'. In effect, Bataidars were able to retain a very small portion of production in their hands. In protest against this exploitation, in 1938 Kisan Sabha presented a detailed memorandum to the Bengal Land Revenue Commission but it had not the desired impact. Ultimately, the movement was launched for restricting the share of Jotedars to maximum 1/3rd of production. The movement was launched in the partition days in the twilight period of independence. These Jotedars were engaged in moneylending business also. Special rights relating to Land and money lending business, enabled them to exert power and influence in rural areas.

During the years 1941-45, Bengal was reeling under the fury of natural calamities

like severe drought, floods and epidemics. Poor peasants, Bataidars and agricultural labourers were badly hit by these calamities. Due to relief work undertaken during this period by Kisan Sabha, it gradually emerged as a prominent organisation of poor peasants. Round about this time, Bengal Kisan Sabha launched the 'Tebhag Movement' in 1946.

This movement was initially started in North West Bengal at Atwari Village of Dinajpur Dist. There, the Bataidars carried the grains produced in the fields of landlords, to their own crushing grounds, instead of crushing the same at the places of Jotedars as was the practice hitherto. Within a span of 15 days, the movement spread all over Dinajpur District. About 1000 peasant volunteers and Sabha workers were arrested during the movement (4). After some time Bataidars carried the total produce to their own grounds without differentiating between rich Jotedars and Poor peasants, whose portion of land was cultivated on Bataidar System. This gave rise to social tension and strife. Severe discontent spread amongst poor peasants and the movement met with stiff resistance. In consequence, movement weakened and police were ultimately successful in curbing the movement.

This movement did not secure any benefits for Agricultural Labour working on Daily Wages. However, these workers had participated in large numbers in the movement according to Sunil Sen. This class formed a major militant group in the movement (5) as they expected that they could get back possession of the land usurped by the Jotedars.

Another unique feature of the movement is that Santhals, Orang, Hagnang and other Vanavasis (tribals) participated in the movement. Prominent amongst these were Santhal Bataidars and landless agricultural labour. Intensity of the movement was severe in Jalpaiguri District. The workers in tea plantations also joined the movement.

Though the movement was militant, there were no clashes with the Jotedars or police, Bengal Govt. passed 'Baragdar Bill' as a result of the movement. It gave some security/protection to Bataidars but it was not satisfactory and sufficient. However, enactment of this legislation was somewhat instrumental in bringing an end to this movement (6). One of the founders of Naxalite movement, Charu Muzumdar however has expressed a different view. According to him, reason for failure of this movement lies in its inability of pooling arms and ammunition, on local levels and the leaders directing the movement did not firmly believe in armed revolution (7).

Another special point is that Jotedars in large numbers were Muslims in Rangpur Dist., while Bataidar Santhals belonged to Hindu Rajvanshi Community. When Mohamedan Jotedars violently attacked Hindu Bataidars and burnt their houses, leaders of Kisan Sabha, prevented agricultural labourers from counter attacking; since they felt that such a counter attack could have sparked off fierce bloody communal riots.

It should be noted that Mohamedan Bataidars in Maimensing Dist. did not agitate against Mohamedan Jotedars. This may be due to the fact that there had been severe Hindu-Muslim riots in 1946 in Bengal. Majority of Muslims had severed their

connections with Kisan Sabha. Sunil Sen, who had actively participated in this movement, has made a mention of this fact (8).

It can be said that pseudo secularism, selfish political motives and fear psychosis were the integral ingredients of communist philosophy and movement since its inception.

The impact of this movement was very much restricted as was its scope. Earlier, there had been some Kisan movements guided by Gandhian principles but this struggle for peasants, carried out by political parties for political objectives assumed significant importance (9). Sunil Sen has described this struggle as a crucial turning point in the history of the peasant struggles (10).

It would be no exaggeration if we conclude that such movements (like Tebhag carried on by communists) launched by political parties for political gains defeat the very purpose of such movements of poor peasants and Agriculture labour and it also weakens their morale.

### 3. ARMED REVOLT IN TELANGANA (1946-51)

Indian Independence came in sight at the end of World War II. At or about the same time, peasant movements slowly became militant. Armed Struggles were resorted to. Peasant struggle in Telangana led by communists (CPI) is very important and significant one, in view of its intensity, militant attitude, and political and philosophical base.

Amongst about 600 princely States in India at that time, Hyderabad was prominent one and was ruled by Nizam. In this largest Princely State Jahagirdars, Deshmukhs, Deshpandes etc. formed a well established influential class. These parasitic intermediaries between Govt. and peasants, exploited the peasants and agricultural labour. The poor peasants were reeling under the double pressure, one of Bonded Labour System and another of slavery arising out of indebtedness (Bhagela). In this feudal system, poor peasants and agricultural labour belonging to scheduled castes like Mala, Madiga and tribal communities like Chenchu, Koya etc. were extremely exploited.

In the post World War II period, there had been widespread severe discontent against British Rule and as a result majority of Hindu Populace in Hyderabad was in a mood to revolt against Nizam. In such circumstances, Peasants' movement sprang up in Telangana.

Main demands, on which attention was focussed in the aforesaid movement were as follows :

- (i) System of bonded labour (vetti) should be abolished.
- (ii) Tenants should be given protection by conferring on them ownership rights of land, which they were cultivating,
- (iii) Levy imposed by Nizam Govt. on rich farmers in Hyderabad State (making it compulsory to sell foodgrains at very low unremunerative prices) should be removed.

Some other prominent demands included, abolition of Jahagirdari System, reduction in sum of Thoka (Rent) required to be paid by the tenants etc. (11)

As this movement got momentum, fresh demands were put forward, followed by some plan of action to support the said demands. Some of them were to secure benefits for medium farmers and the agricultural labour. To take possession of Govt. fallow lands, to take over huge stocks of foodgrains piled up by big zamindars and to distribute the same amongst rural poor, to waive all loans of peasants, to pass land ceiling acts were some prominent fresh demands.

Initially, this movement was non-violent but as the repression of Nizam Govt. increased, this turned into a violent one while resisting such oppressive measures. Ittehad-ul-Musalmin, a communal front, led by Kasim Razvi, unleashed reign of terror all over Hyderabad State. After India became independent on 15.8.1947, inefficient administration in Hyderabad State, gradually disintegrated.

The joint influence of national movement and peasants' struggle in Hyderabad State, brought the Nizam Rule on the verge of collapse. Ultimately India Govt. launched Police Action on 13.9.1948 against Nizam Rule and within a span of 5 days Nizam surrendered. This also put an end to Razakar atrocities.

However, Peasants' Struggle continued. Arms and ammunition abandoned by Razakars were taken hold of, by communist groups. It may be that certain erstwhile Razakars might have engaged themselves in arson and looting in the garb of communists, for a while. It was also obvious that it was not possible for the communists to fight against the Indian Armed Forces under the command of Gen. J.N. Choudhary for a long time. In this struggle, about 3 lakh people from 2000 villages in Nalgonda, Warangal, Karimnagar, Khammam and Hyderabad Districts had to face severe oppression. About 50,000 persons were taken into custody for some days while 5000 persons were held in prisons for some years, as stated by Communist leader, Shri Sundarayya (12). The police and military measures ultimately resulted in weakening and withering away of this movement.

But it was not the military thumb-rule alone that was responsible to put an end to this movement. During this period, a great change in thinking and opinion of the people of Hyderabad State was noticed, in connection with this movement. People never accepted this movement as an instrument of freedom. Military Rule, after taking over Nizam State administration, passed Jahagirdari Abolition Act in August 1949 and also appointed a committee to recommend comprehensive land reform measures. This also had a great impact on the movement which weakened gradually from September 1949 and in the end, the movement was withdrawn in October 1951.

Prof. Dhanagare has made an indepth and comprehensive study to ascertain the nature of leadership and that of participation in the said movement. He has also made an attempt to analyse whether peasants had participated in the movement to secure certain immediate benefits and relief, enabling them to temporarily tide over their difficulties or whether their participation had an objective of bringing about wider social transformation (13).

It is quite certain that struggle in Telangana was not patronised by any specific class of populace in rural areas. People from different strata of society participated in the same (14). Prominent Communist Leaders belonged to rich peasants' class. They were the representatives of rich peasants from Kamma or Reddy communities. To form a united front of middleclass peasants, agricultural labourers and rich farmers, to fight against big landlords (Zamindars) like Deshmukhs and Jahagirdars, was to the advantage and convenience of such leaders. Abolishing bonded labour system, imposing levy of foodgrains only on Deshmukhs, Jahagirdars and rich peasants, exempting small farmers from such levy, being the main demands, it was inevitable and natural that middleclass peasants, tenants, bataidars and landless agricultural labour should form a united front to carry out such struggle.

As the movement became intensified, landless agricultural labour started usurping land of rich peasants. This drove a wedge in the United Front. Rich peasants began to withdraw and after Military regime firmly established its hold, this class totally disassociated itself from the struggle. In the second and last phase, the participants were only the agricultural labour and tribesmen. Ultimately the struggle was withdrawn.

#### 4. OUTCOME OF THE ARMED STRUGGLE

It may be said that this movement was successful to the extent that it was instrumental in creating social and political awareness amongst peasants and agricultural labourers (15). The movement was not a complete success on account of another reason viz. the movement drifted away from national stream and political aspirations of the people, resulting in anti-movement stand of the people, who started supporting the government. In another context, D.B. Thengadi has observed that any struggle which tries to safeguard interests of its own class of participants only, neglecting the national interest is bound to result in a failure (16). This struggle led by the communists met with exactly this fate.

Though for a short period, this movement appeared to be successful, it has to be conceded that it miserably failed in bringing about total and wider socio-economic change.

In certain other parts of the country, some movements struggles of peasants had been launched in the twilight period of Indian Independence, though not on such large and militant scale like 'Telangana' or 'Tebhag' movements. Nevertheless, those were quite note-worthy as poor peasants and agricultural labour had predominantly participated in the same. Kathleen Gough has observed that in Tamilnadu (Tanjavur) and Kerala, these two classes had displayed such militant attitude (17). In the then 'Travancore State', there was an armed peasants upsurge in 'Punnapa and Wylar' in October 1946. This was against feudalism but it failed. However, this enabled communists to establish their dominance in the said region.

This movement was launched by 'Travancore Trade Union Congress', to which 'Travancore Agricultural Labour Union' was affiliated. This union was formed in 1941-42. This movement has been noteworthy, as it had been successful in enlisting the

support of workers from various industries, such as Bidi, Oil Mills, Toddy Tapping, Fishing etc. and the Agricultural Labour.

## **(B) Post Independence Movements**

### **1. STRUGGLE OF WARLI TRIBESMEN**

Participation of tribesmen in prominent movements and struggles during the period from 1940-50, had been quite significant. Mention has earlier been made of their participation in 'Tebhag' movement. Similarly, the struggle launched by Warali Tribesmen in Thane District of Maharashtra State sometime in 1945-46, under the leadership of Kisan Sabha was very important. The population of tribesmen in Thane Dist. is about 25%. They belong to the poorest of poor strata. They are living socio-economic life, much below poverty line. These tribesmen were ruthlessly exploited, both economically and socially by the unholy alliance of Zamindars, Forest Contractors, Moneylenders and forest officers. These Waralis launched a very peaceful and thrilling struggle under the guidance and leadership of Marxist leader, Godavari Parulekar. Their main demands related to abolition of bonded labour system, higher wages for agricultural labour, rise in wage rate for cutting trees and grass (fodder) in forests. Great discontent was simmering in their minds, as tribal women had to suffer atrocities of Zamindars and Moneylenders. This struggle was carried out by holding meetings, seminars and by resorting to strike, peacefully in the face of the aggressive posture adopted by the alliance of Zamindars, Moneylenders, Govt. officers and teakwood contractors.

The movement met with success due to their determination, discipline and unity and ultimately they got an increase in wages (18).

Though such movements and struggles were unsuccessful in bringing about a socio-economic change in twilight period of independence, still the same attracted the attention of people at large and the Govt. machinery and as a consequence, Govt. was obliged to take suitable measures relating to rural development and land reforms without further loss of time. These movements/struggles instilled to some extent a sense of awareness amongst agricultural labour and it can be undoubtedly inferred that this has been the limited success of such movements/struggles.

### **2. SHAHADA TRIBESMEN STRUGGLE**

Another important struggle launched by tribal landless labour in India, after independence, is the one in Shahada Taluka of Dhule District in Maharashtra State. In this Taluka, Tribal population is 40% of the total population. Out of this 40%, between 50% to 60% tribals are landless. 70% - 80% of the total land is owned by rich Gujar Zamindars. These Gujar Zamindars migrated to this part of country from Gujarath by crossing the adjoining border in 19th century. They grabbed the land of Bhilla tribesmen by various unscrupulous means, turning Bhillas into slaves. They usurped the land of tribals, in their double role, as Patils (Village Officer) and Moneylenders. Thus Bhillas,

who traditionally owned the land, were reduced to the position of tenants or agricultural labour, in respect of the same lands.

Tenancy legislations were enacted from time to time by Government in the interest of tribals as well as other tenants. In 1948 after independence, Bombay Tenancy Act in Maharashtra provided some protection to the tenants.

However, there was no appreciable change in the process of rendering Bhilla Tribals, landless, in Shahada Taluka. Gujar moneylenders had grabbed the land of tribals by resorting to various unscrupulous means such as taking over legal possession of land, mortgaged by tribals, who were unable to repay debt, to cultivate land of tribals in the garb of tenants, to purchase lands of tribals by fraudulent means, in auctions held by co-operative institutions etc. Thus grave injustice was being done to tribals and this process of exploitation continued till 1970-72.

Since they were deprived of land, a great discontent was simmering in the minds of tribals and they felt an urge to form a union to resist such injustice heaped on them. But for this purpose, it was necessary that suitable leadership from amongst themselves should be found. As luck would have it, Ambarsing Survanti, educated upto high school level, came forward to form such a union. He was a Sarvodaya worker and used to sing Bhajans. He started an office of the union at Shahada. Immediately, 61 huts of tribals in the villages, were destroyed and the atrocities on tribal women by rowdies also increased. In 1971, when Maharashtra was facing a severe drought, a Gujar Zamindar in Patilwadi village complained that tribals had looted his foodgrain godown. Police, Moneylenders and Zamindars conspired and attacked the tribals. One tribal was killed in firing. Such unjust and inciting incidents led to the formation of the union.

Situation was conducive for forming united tribal union, as the repression unleashed by Gujar Zamindars, Moneylenders and Police had assumed grave proportion. Various unions therefore, entered in the field. These unions like 'Bhilla Adivasi Seva Mandal', Landless Labour Union (Redflag), Independent Young Marxists, Gram-Swarajaya Samiti and other activists like Sarvodaya workers jointly convened a conference styled as 'Bhumukti Parishad' at Shahada on 30 th January 1972.

In this conference 'Shramik Sanghatan' under the leadership of Ambersing was formed and a plan of action was formulated.

Main demands in the conference related to restoration of land to legally entitled tribals, declaring null and void the transfer of tribals' land effected after 1947, to waive loan granted to tribals by government, semi-government organizations. Movements were launched, meetings and conferences were held for realization of these demands. An attempt was thus made to build up a union of tribals. Village Committees, Youth Forums, Women's Committees were established to strengthen the union. In April 1974, a large convention was held at Prakashkhede. Saldars (Agricultural labour on yearly wage) went on strike. Young Marxist workers, strived to strengthen the union. Unfortunately Ambersing died in 1974 and his death brought about an end of this union and the movement.

Tribal Union was unsuccessful because of the unholy alliance between Govt.

machinery, Zamindars and officers. However, the movement of labour union launched in Shahada, brought to the surface the injustice done to landless agricultural labour, and tribals. The motivating force behind this movement was that of Naxalites - Lenin - Marxists Communists but instead of resorting to violent class struggle (violence for violence sake), this movement tried in a constructive way to build up an alternate people-power centre, for bringing the fruits of Development schemes and opportunities within the reach of poor tribal workers. and nearer to common men. However, this effort proved to be short-lived.

### **3. NAXALITE MOVEMENTS-STRUGGLES**

Naxalite movements occupy a prime position in the history of numerous struggles launched by Indian peasants, tribals and landless labour for securing for themselves ownership of land and other rights. These movements (Naxalite) are all the more important in view of their basic philosophy, intensity and effects.

Government led by Communist Party of India (CPI-M) came to power in West Bengal on 2.3.1967. Eminent Marxist leader, Harekrishna Konar was appointed as Revenue Minister. At that time, implementation of land reforms by adopting various programmes, was engaging attention of governments throughout the Nation. An important issue was how effective and equitable distribution of land declared surplus should be made, on passing of Land Ceiling Acts, after taking over possession of such land by Govt. In this process of redistribution of surplus land, there were a number of difficulties and obstacles. Especially the landlords who were deprived of land under the provisions of the acts, took the matter to the courts. Under Democratic Constitutional frame, thousands of such petitions were pending with Courts. Marxist leaders had also started to abide by legal and constitutional provisions; since their party had come to power.

In such circumstances, Charu Muzumdar was vehemently proclaiming that West Bengal Govt. would be unsuccessful in implementing land distribution programmes. He challenged Revenue Minister, Konar mainly on three grounds viz.

- (i) Govt. succumbed to the tactics of govt. officials (machinery) and did not enforce the legal provisions for taking possession of surplus land.
- (ii) Confrontation arose between the beneficiaries (peasants) who got land by such legal process and the others and
- (iii) Such agriculturists who got the land by legal process, had become self-complacent with their gains and developed spiteful attitude towards others.

Therefore, Charu Muzumdar stressed the need for political awareness amongst agriculturists and that such campaign should try to expose Govt. and the agriculturists, who had acquired ownership of land.

On 18th March 1967, Convention of Peasants was held at Siliguri in Darjeeling District. Therein attention was focussed on some demands; prominent being (i) Distribution of surplus land through Peasant Committees and (ii) to provide arms to agriculturists. It was also suggested that it would become necessary to launch a struggle

against Central and State Governments and that the struggle would be a prolonged one. Kanu Sanyal and Jangal Santhal, the tribal leaders, were the conveners of this conference.

In the opinion of Kanu Sanyal, between March and April 1967, almost all villages in the said region had geared up for such movement. About 15000 to 20000 peasants had enrolled themselves as active workers. Peasant Committee was formed in every village and these committees later on were converted into armed protection forces. Land was grabbed in the name of such committees and record relating to land revenue was set on fire. Loan taken by poor tribals was waived. Some Zamindars were awarded death penalty. Armed groups were formed after snatching rifles from Zamindars. Other traditional weapons like bows and arrows, spears were stockpiled and parallel Government was established (19).

Thereafter, Harekrishna Konar met the rebels and it was decided in the discussion, that, rebels should stop illegal activities. Govt. would redistribute land on receiving applications from peasants and that Kanu Sanyal and Jangal Santhal should surrender to the police. But rebels in North Bengal denied the existence of any such agreement. An encounter took place between the police and rebel peasants on 23.5.1967, killing one policeman. In the counter offensive launched by the police on 25.5.1967, 9 persons were killed including women and minor children. Peasants, in large number, were arrested. Ultimately Jangal Santhal was arrested on 20.7.1967 and Kanu Sanyal and others surrendered before the police in October 1968 and apparently peace was restored in Naxalbari region.

This movement continued for few months only. Why was this movement unsuccessful ? Kanu Sanyal has observed in the 'Report on Terai Peasant Movement', that it was felt that firm and sound foundation of movement was laid, when rural people armed themselves and when Jotedars ran away. It was also felt that armed groups of people can be used as armed troops and it would be possible to form numerous guerilla groups due to spontaneous upsurge of people.

Some vagabond youths having no ideal became leaders of such armed groups. Distribution of land did not receive proper attention after Jotedars fled. Popular support could not be mobilized. Might and strength of opposition could not be properly assessed. There was also total ignorance of military strategy. These were the main reasons of failure of Naxalite Movement. Absence of clarity of basic thinking, tactical mistakes and want of elasticity in policies did not allow the naxalite movement to last for a long time. Charu Muzumdar has summarised as follows :

"In this movement, peasants fought not for land but for political power. They mainly depended on themselves. The movement was directed against 'Revisionism' and such movement can be carried out only on the philosophy of Chairman Mao-tse-Tung".

This movement had a great impact on rural structure and communist struggles. A process of rethinking started amongst communists. It also inspired rural poor in other

regions of the country, to raise intensive struggles. However, after 1970-71 in Bengal, the influence of this movement started spreading to urban areas from rural areas and this gave a new turn to the movement.

#### **4. SHREEKAKULAM TRIBAL REVOLT (1967-70)**

Naxalite Struggle had a substantial impact on the political movements in certain other parts of India also. Similar struggles for land were launched e.g. Debra and Gopi-Vallabhpur in Midnapur District (Bengal) - August 1969 to March 1970. Mushahari Block, Muzaffarpur District (Bihar) - August 1968 - 1970 Waynad, Kannur District (Kerala) - 1968.

However, these struggles were like very small spots on the large canvas of Indian Sub-continent. Amongst these struggles, Shreekakulam Movement in Andhra Pradesh is very significant and important.

Shreekakulam is a hilly terrain in Andhra Pradesh. The number of tribals is quite large. As in other tribal areas, here also, great discontent was simmering in the minds of tribals, who were poor and exploited by moneylenders and Zamindars. Satyanarayan and Kailasam, tribal teachers, emerged as leaders and Shreekakulam Movement was launched in March 1968. It had also received guidance of Charu Muzumdar. Some middleclass highly educated people joined the movement after some time e.g. Renowned Surgeon, Bhaskarrao was a prominent leader. In Warangal, Khamman, Karimnagar and other districts, group of Nagi Reddy was on the forefront of this revolutionary movement. Special mention has to be made of the fact that rebellion of peasants in Telangana during 1946 — 1951, was concentrated in this region only (19A). In the beginning of the year 1968, hundreds of tribals participated in the struggle. Looting of arms and cash, massacre of moneylenders, zamindars and police were the primary objectives. However, the sole intention was not to kill all the moneylenders but the aim was to distribute their land and wealth amongst the poor. For taking possession of such wealth and land, it was decided to drive away the moneylenders. Promissory Notes (documentary evidence of indebtedness) lying in vaults of moneylenders were to be grabbed and burnt and the property looted was to be distributed amongst the poor. This was generally the basic idea behind this struggle.

Therefore, it was gaining popularity amongst rural poor and was being justified and supported by such people (20). In such armed attacks, which were mere dacoities as per law, Naxalites burnt currency notes of the value of Rs. 5 lakhs (21). Poor tribals in this hilly region were overjoyed with the dramatic salvation from slavery and indebtedness. Charu Muzumdar visited this part of the country in January 1969 and a decision was taken to enlarge the sphere of this struggle. However, struggle could invoke no response on planes, where people supported the police. Satyanarayan died on 10th July 1970 and thereafter this movement came to an end.

Though naxalite movement is still continuing in some regions especially in Andhra Pradesh and in Gadchiroli Dist. of Maharashtra State, it has not assumed vast proportion. It also cannot be said that it has been successful; because the strategic

tactical planning of Naxalites was full of flaws. In their opinion, it was necessary to forge unity of people from rock bottom strata of society, and to wipe out arch class enemies like Zamindars, Moneylenders, even by killing them. Acquisition of power was their main objective and programmes for land reforms etc. were relegated to back stage. These programmes, they felt, could be implemented after coming to power (22). Such changes in priorities were introduced.

On account of this three pronged policies and due to the fact that traditional arms like bows and arrows etc. of tribals were of no match to modern arms and weaponry of police, who resorted to oppressive measures, Naxalites were bound to fail. It was expected that with the killing of so called class enemies like moneylenders, zamindars, people would revolt enmasse but this hope was belied. Naxalites were over confident of the success by taking resort to Chinese model of guerilla ware-fare. Proclamation of revolt, not for lands or crops but for acquisition of power (based on class struggle), failed miserably to gain support of poor. When Shreekakulam struggle came to an end in 1970, even the communist party of China criticized Charu Muzumdar and his action plan for individual killing of moneylenders. It was maintained by them that the plan of action was not suitable in the circumstances, prevailing in India.

It is true that this movement individually benefitted some landless tribals and agricultural labourers, who developed soft corner for Naxalites. However, this movement failed in the context of bringing about wider social structural change, in forging unity amongst agricultural labour and ensuing their progress and prosperity

Killings of selected class enemies, gave an ugly turn to this wider class struggle. It became impossible for the rural people to differentiate between the rebels in the revolt and the dacoits, who were out to take advantage of the situation. The influence of this movement over the people, therefore, gradually waned away.

### **(C) Rise of Independent Agricultural Labour Unions and movements**

During the first decade after independence i.e. from 1947 to 1956, National leaders had before them, prominent task of abolishing the prevalent feudal agricultural production system and the agrarian relations. Under such circumstances, leaders of peasants' organisations had no other alternative but to formulate a policy, consistent with democratic rights and work procedures. As this was a national issue, how to implement the policy of 'Land to the Tiller', was the basic problem. It was also felt necessary to decide the nature of relationship between landlords and their tenants, actually cultivating the land and the framework of laws to be enacted in this connection. Various Land Reform Acts such as 'Abolition of Zamindari-Jahagirdari' and Tenancy Acts were passed, in this period.

'All India Kisan Sabha' stressed the need for speedy and effective implementation of these acts, during this period. Protection to unsecured tenants, was considered to be an important issue. Kisan Sabha's policy had been of securing remunerative prices for agricultural produce by prevailing upon the Government to adopt suitable policies to that effect. Landlords generally and rich agriculturists primarily, were the main

supporters of Kisan Sabha, right from the beginning. Priorities of Demand to be formulated by Kisan Sabha were being decided by this class alone. Though, Ceiling on Landholdings, Distribution of Surplus land, transferring rights to Government, fallow lands to landless poor etc. were the subjects covered by the demands of Kisan Sabha, it had not been able to launch so far a formidable movement for the purpose.

After 1956 change in the objectives, policy and strategies of Kisan Sabha became quite necessary and inevitable; because the absolute and unfettered power and influence of big Landlords and Zamindars diminished due to various legislations e.g. Ceiling Act, Tenancy Act, etc. enacted in this period. Majority of demands of rich agriculturists who were the backbone of Kisan Sabha, having been realized, this class had opposed any radical socio-economic change in rural life.

Therefore, this class deserted Kisan Sabha. Membership of Kisan Sabha dwindled down to 5 lakhs from 10 lakhs, as rich middle class agriculturist lost all interest in Sabha's activities (23). Since there was no awakening amongst marginal farmers and agricultural labour, they could not launch any united struggle.

All India Kisan Sabha was working as a 'Peasants' Front', one of the wings of Communist Party, from its inception and party was using this front for furthering its political ends and as such communist leaders did not attempt to form a separate joint union of Agricultural Labour and marginal farmers alone. Thinking of communists was not clear as to which classes should be members of the organisation, Kisan Sabha was open to all classes, right from rich agriculturists to agricultural labour. But from 1954 onwards, this thinking underwent a change and the communists took a decision to form a joint union of Agricultural labour and the poor peasants. However, the idea of forming a joint front with middleclass peasants, they being friendly, still persisted.

They decided to exclude the class of rich agriculturists but kept open the option to receive their support and co-operation in exceptional circumstances (24). But this balancing act did not succeed. This confusion resulted in weakening the organisation and strength of Kisan Sabha. Not only that, but it also brought to surface the divergent views held by various communist leaders. Though some semblance of activities of Kisan Sabha was visible at the time of its Silver Jubilee Convention in 1961, the activities gradually came to a grinding halt, and ultimately in 1968, Kisan Sabha was split. Two different organizations bearing the same name came into existence. Conventions of both these factions were held simultaneously. One organization was affiliated to CPI, rightists wing, while the other one was to CPI (M). With the split in CPI, it was obvious that there would be such a split in Kisan Sabha also.

Quite early CPI had felt the need to form an independent agricultural labour union, though that party was faced with conflict of thoughts and internal contradictions till 1968, as mentioned above. In 1939, there was a communist union of Agricultural labour in Tanjavur District. These labourers belonged to Palla and Paraya Scheduled Castes. In pre-independence days, communists had their agricultural labour unions in Andhra and Kerala.

## 1. UNION MOVEMENTS IN DIFFERENT STATES

They staged a struggle against bonded labour system and inhuman treatment. Punjab Khet Mazdoor Sabha was formed in December 1954 (25). Till 1958, there were agricultural labour unions on State level in Andhra, Punjab and Bihar but by and large, these were dormant. State level conventions were held in Kerala, West Bengal and Maharashtra in 1968. In September 1968, All India Agricultural Labour Convention was held, for the first time, at Moga in Punjab under the auspices of communist party of India. Resolution to form Indian Khet Mazdoor Union was adopted in this convention.

While thus deciding to form such a union, communist party, knowingly connived at the fact that interests of peasants and the agricultural labour were somewhat different, and tried to forge unity of both the groups. Due to this factor coupled with split in Communist Party, Indian Khet Mazdoor Union was unable to work as an independent formidable agricultural labour union.

Indian Khet Mazdoor Union, with the co-operation of All India Kisan Sabha started an All India movement in latter half of 1969 to take possession of Govt. fallow land and to distribute the same. Agricultural labour and marginal farmers participated in this movement in Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Kerala. In West Bengal, agitation was launched for taking possession of declared surplus land and for preventing the eviction of Bataidars (26).

Joint struggle was launched in 1970 by Bharatiya Khet Mazdoor Union, All India Kisan Sabha, and CPI. They had formed a joint action committee for the purpose.

This action committee had drawn a programme, which mainly aimed at the following :

- (1) Taking possession of Govt. fallow land, including forest lands and distributing the same amongst landless agricultural labour.
- (2) Secure protection and ownership rights for tenants.
- (3) Resecure for tribals in forest areas, their land grabbed by Moneylenders and Zamindars.
- (4) Secure rights to huts in agricultural fields and home-stead land for agricultural labour.
- (5) To forcibly grab land of Big Zamindars and contractors and to bring about radical changes in Land Ceiling Acts. To distribute surplus land amongst landless agricultural labour (27).

This movement was launched on 1.7.1970 and entered the second phase on 15.8.1970. According to Union's Report, this movement evoked spectacular response. As per their information, about 15 lakh people participated. 1,34,000 hectare land was taken possession of and out of the same, 85,000 hectare land was cultivated (28).

## 2. ACHIEVEMENTS OF MOVEMENTS-AN APPRAISAL

What was the impact of the movement ? To what extent, it had been successful ? How much land was taken possession of and distributed amongst landless agricultural labour ? If we analyse the movement to seek answers to the above questions, we come

to the conclusion that the movement was quite insignificant and got only symbolic success. However, some scholars subscribe to the view that the movement was successful in achieving some social and political gains. Creation of an urge in the minds of leaders heading Govts. to enact and implement speedily the Land Reform Acts, was a significant achievement of this movement (29). Another achievement, in the opinion of some other researchers, was the large scale participation of poor and landless agricultural labour and social and political awakening amongst them. General Secretary of Communist Party of India, Shri Giri Prasad Jain in his report on the 'Great Land Struggle', comes to an optimistic conclusion. "In this giant land struggle the most important achievement is the appointment of Land Reforms Committee by Central Government" (30). In an article written by S.N. Dwivedi in 1976, he has unmasked the shallow and unrealistic nature of the above conclusions, which reflects an attitude of excessive and misplaced self complacency.

Dwivedi was the advisor to Central Govt. on 'Land Reforms' matters. He has observed that "The principle of Land to the Tiller is absolutely reasonable. It would also be appropriate to take away land from a person, who is not actually cultivating the same. However, if any, ministry decides to implement vigorously these policies in letter and spirit, such government would not survive even for a day (31) This statement throws ample light on alarming conditions in the implementation of land reform acts, 6 years after the C.P.I. movement.

'Land Grab' movement launched by the C.P.I. and the socialists met with the same fate of a man who faints on getting an attack of epilepsy (fit). They were exhausted. Bharatiya Khet Mazdoor Union did not launch any struggles or movements, systematically and methodically, in relation to land. In election times, agricultural labourers who were members of B.K.M. union, received step motherly treatment as has been noted by K. Balagopalan (32). However, it has to be conceded that this movement was instrumental in lowering the limit of landholding under the Land Ceiling Acts, and Govt. took over possession of some surplus land. Another achievement was that the landless agricultural labour attracted more political attention.

After 1970, Bharatiya Khet Mazdoor Union, launched one or two movements at National Level, but the same did not have much impact. In 1972, this Union staged 'Satyagraha' against the rising prices of essential commodities.

On 27 March 1973, a massive Morcha of people was led to the Parliament and a memorandum bearing about 1.50 crore signatures was presented to the Speaker of Lok Sabha. Distribution of Land to the landless, fair wages, and putting a stop to social atrocities were the three main demands, cited in the memorandum (33).

From June to September 1974, B.K.M. Union launched a struggle for securing increase in wages of Agricultural Labour but it was ineffective. The union led a morcha to Parliament on 20.3.1979 voicing demands for stoppage of atrocities on scheduled castes and the tribals, speedy implementation of Land Reform Acts, and the enactment of comprehensive legislation relating to agricultural labour.

In 1985, movement was launched to grab the land declared surplus. This movement

was successful to some extent in Bihar and Andhra Pradesh. Nevertheless, the movement was only a token attempt.

C.P.I. (M), left wing of communists, however, had divergent views in connection with Agricultural Labour Union. Till 1981, they stuck to the view that joint front of peasants and agricultural labour was essential for agrarian revolution. At the end of 1981, they established 'All India Agricultural Workers' Union' (A.I.A.W.U.).

However, this union carried out its activities with the co-operation of Akhil Bharatiya Kisan Sabha. Joint conference of these two Unions was held in November 1982 at Midnapur (Bengal). In their policy resolution, it was mentioned that both the unions had an objective of bringing about Agrarian Revolution in rural areas. It was further stated that for achieving this goal, it was necessary to build up a strong joint movement of peasants and the agricultural labour.

All India Agricultural Workers' Union, had its branches in five States viz. Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Punjab and Tripura. Then till November 1983, branches were established in Maharashtra, Karnatak, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana and the membership increased.

Till 1988 some movements for realization of demands of agricultural labour were launched in various States by this Union but all along these movements relied only on the support of Kisan Sabha and many other left communist fronts. Leaders of this Union, firmly believe that a strong and effective union of Agricultural labour alone cannot be formed. Therefore, the union of only Agricultural labour has not launched any major nationwide struggle.

### **3. INDIAN NATIONAL RURAL LABOUR FEDERATION (INRLF)**

In 1969, INTUC (Indian National Trade Union Congress), a central labour organization, passed a resolution, making clear its intentions to form rural labour unions and in particular Agricultural Labour Union, for enlarging the scope of its activities in rural areas (34). After a lapse of many years, 'Indian National Rural Labour Federation', a rural labour organization, was formed on 25.7.1974. This organization was affiliated to INTUC. B.C. Bhagawati, President, INTUC INRLF, proclaimed the objectives and the structural nature of this rural organization on 2nd February 1975. They declared that the organization was meant for Agricultural Labour, Bataidars, Tenants, marginal Farmers and rural artisans.

Like INTUC, INRLF also is an organization, which helps and co-operates in implementation of Govt. policies. This union is generally seen as rural labour wing of Indian National Congress, a political party. This has been established with a political motive of preventing any alienation of rural poor from congress and for ensuring that opposition political parties should not be benefitted in such a situation (35). Federation's main stress has been on creating an awakening amongst agricultural labour and the rural poor by undertaking training and educational programmes. Since Federation totally depended on Congress Party in power, it did not launch any movements or struggles for Agricultural labour.

Due to internal difference of political opinions, in 1980, the Federation split into two groups and the new wing under the name of Indian National Rural and Allied Workers' Federation (INRAWF) came into existence. The work done by INRLF for agricultural labour, was negligible.

#### **4. HIND KHET MAZDOOR SABHA**

Hind Mazdoor Sabha (HMS), is one of the prominent central labour organizations in India. It has done some work in rural areas. 'Khedut Khet Mazdoor Sangh', in Gujarat and 'Shetkari Shet Majoor Panchayat', in Maharashtra have launched some struggles for solving the problems of agricultural labourers. These unions are affiliated to Hind Mazdoor Sabha. Though these unions have been in existence since 1974, an all India Organization under the name of Hind Khet Mazdoor Sabha, affiliated to Hind Mazdoor Sabha was formed on 5th August 1982. In 1983, the number of unions affiliated to this organization was 18 and the membership was 70,190 (36).

#### **5. REPUBLICAN PARTY OF INDIA-ORGANISATION FOR BACKWARD CLASS**

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar embraced Buddhism in October 1956, renouncing Hindu Religion. Even after struggling for number of years against caste system in Hindu Religion with its resultant social atrocities on downtrodden, being unable to bring about any emancipation from these evils, ultimately he embraced Buddhism. Along with him lakhs of Mahars - Downtrodden, adopted Buddhism in 'Dhamma-Chakra Pravartana', Programme at Nagpur. As a political off-shoot of this convention, a new political party, 'Republican Party of India', was founded in October 1957. The erstwhile party, Scheduled Caste Federation was transformed into this new form. Dr. Babasaheb tried to free the party from the cage of casteism and gave it a broad social and political base.

Under the auspices of this party, big morchas of Agricultural Labour and the marginal farmers were organized in Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and some other States. About three lakhs agricultural labourers participated in the same. One special fact, which deserves to be mentioned, is that bulk of this class of agricultural labour, comprises of people from scheduled castes. The main demands put forward in these morchas were as follows.

- (i) Ownership of land be vested in the tiller of the soil.
- (ii) Fallow land be distributed amongst landless labour.
- (iii) Provisions of The Minimum Wages Act, 1948, should be strictly enforced.
- (iv) Sufficient foodgrains, at controlled prices, be provided through Fair Price Shops.

This movement, evoked lukewarm response from agricultural labour, who did not belong to scheduled castes. The barriers created by castes, remained intact. The movement was only marginally successful. RPI had launched number of movements so far but those were of no consequence.

It is really most unfortunate that the Republican Party of India could not cross the caste barriers and organize all the landless agricultural labour on wider basis.

### **(D) Akhil Bharatiya Krishi Mazdoor Sangh**

So far, we have tried to analyse the work of various agricultural labour organizations, committed to political parties like Congress, Leftist and Rightist Communist etc. These organizations are working as labour fronts of such political parties. Even then, in spite of the existence of the above organisations, 'Akhil Bharatiya Krishi Mazdoor Sangh', was formed in 1978. It is affiliated to the non-political central labour organization 'Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh', which occupies second place amongst the All India Central Labour Organisations.

'Buldhana Dist. Krishhi Mazdoor Sangh', agricultural labour union affiliated to Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh, has been carrying on its activities in Buldhana District of Maharashtra State since 1974. Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh in its conference held at Amritsar in 1975, resolved to start Agricultural labour union and nominated Sardar Sukhnandan Singh as convenor. On 8th February 1978, Akhil Bharatiya Khetihar Mazdoor Sangh, affiliated to Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh was founded. Shri Pundalikrao Danve, the then Member of Parliament and Shri M.G. Dongre (Buldhana) were appointed President and the General Secretary, respectively of the said sangh.

Thereafter, efforts were made to spread gradually the work of this Union, throughout India. On 8th May 1983, All India Convention was held at Buldhana (Maharashtra). In this convention, R.N. Singh (Varanasi) and M.G. Dongre (Buldhana) were elected as President and the General Secretary respectively (37). About 3000 delegates from 8 States attended this convention. At present the sangh is actively working in 14 States and it has total membership of four lakhs (38).

### **Independent Non - Political Union**

Foundation of A.B.K.M. Sangh was the historical requirement of the time. The All India Organisations of Agricultural Labour in existence had been committed to political parties and are dancing to the tunes of political leaders and engaging in activities, as per their dictates. The welfare of agricultural labour was neglected and these organisations could not be strong and active due to internal differences and selfish motives of such political parties. Therefore, it was necessary to have an independent organization, free from domination by Govt., Political Parties, leaders, Zamindars and Rural rich etc. This historical necessity was fulfilled by founding 'Akhil Bharatiya Krishi Mazdoor Sangh.'

The outstanding feature of this 'ABKM Sangh' is its non-political nature. It has an aim to secure all the reasonable and just demands from Govt. and landlords on its own strength, up-keeping self-respect and honour.

### **1. VILLAGE AS ONE FAMILY**

Secondly, A.B.K.M. Sangh does not approve the theory of class struggle advocated by the Marxists. As expressed by Shri. D.B. Thengadi, A.B.K.M. Sangh, treats the 'whole village as one family'. Sangh is of the view that ideology of class struggle is totally

irrelevant in the context of Cultural and Historical background of India. Indian communists have not so far been able to come to any definite conclusion about class structure in rural areas. Recently a process has begun, even in Russia and Eastern Europe, which has resulted in the end of conventional philosophy of communists. At present, the communist Utopian and unscientific theory has been shattered and the Soviet Union has completely disintegrated and collapsed and has become the part and parcel of history. What turn the stream of history may take in the near future is still uncertain. However, in keeping with their traditions so far, the Indian Communists believe in inciting the agricultural labour against landlords. When Sangh recognises the whole village as one family, it implies that rich and affluent people in a village have to make some sacrifices voluntarily in the interest of socio-economically downtrodden Brethren. 'ABKM Sangh' would undoubtedly launch a struggle, against those selfish wealthy people who continue to exploit down-trodden and inflict injustice on them. This struggle of the A.B.K.M. Sangh will be directed against injustice and exploitation. Sangh believes in the traditional Indian culture which recognizes all the community, as one family. It would not adhere to the principle of class struggle, which is anti-national (39). To give top priority to National Interest, is another outstanding feature of A.B.K.M. Sangh and it firmly believes that any struggle can be organized within the constructive frame work which can be achieved through Mass mobilisation, Mass education and organised strength.

## **2. MASS MOBILISATION AND MASS EDUCATION**

Once the principles, objectives and philosophy were decided, impregnable and strong organisational frame work was set up to achieve the above mentioned cherished dreams. Committees on village, Taluk, District and State levels were formed. Likewise an All India Level Council of Representatives and the Working Committee, were constituted. Since the experience had proved that the leadership imposed from outside does not help in building up strong and effective organisation, rural worker of the union, was taken as the epicentre of activities at grass root level. While framing organisational structure, full scope was provided for inter-action between workers at all levels. The organisational structure of A.B.K.M.S. was based on two principles i.e. Mass mobilisation, and Mass education. As per its constitution, membership is open to rural poor such as tenants, Bataidars, rural unemployed, artisans, landless agricultural labour, marginal farmers, any worker who toils in his own or other's land, persons engaged in bee-keeping, shepherds etc. Since poverty being common enemy of all these classes, there was no hindrance in building up such joint union, though at times the interests of these classes appear to be conflicting.

Attempts were made to build up organisation to solve various problems and difficulties, faced by the rural poor.

The rural poor have to face a number of serious problems and difficulties e.g. obstacles in distribution of fallow government land amongst the landless, paucity of drinking water, unemployment, partial unemployment, securing grant of Govt. land for

house building, securing permanency for those employed in Forest Department for number of years on daily wage basis, striving for stringent implementation of Minimum Wages Act for agricultural labour and for enactment of comprehensive central law to protect their interests, securing for needy poor ration cards and cards showing that they are living below poverty line, etc. For raising their standard of living, it is necessary to solve these problems. Keeping this in view, 'ABKM Sangh' endeavoured in various States, for the redressal of these grievances and gained limited success.

### 3. STRUGGLE AGAINST INJUSTICE

Availability of sufficient drinking water is also the primary need of human life, akin to other needs like food, clothing and shelter. It is however, lamentable that even after 45 years of independence, about 2,50,000 villages in India are still exposed to acute scarcity of drinking water. The problem still exists, though seven Five Year Plans have already been over. A.B. Krishi Mazdoor Sangh tried to solve the same by launching various movements like mass morchas, Dharanas, in number of States. In May 1987, a large morcha comprising of 5000 rural labour was organised at Khetadi in Rajasthan.

On account of unholy alliance of village officers, Ration shop-keepers and rural rich indulging in black marketing, lakhs of labourers have not yet been provided with ration cards as also the cards indicating that they are subsisting below poverty line. To focuss attention on this as well as on other problems, a massive morcha of 10000 labourers was taken to the Collector's Office at Buldhana (Maharashtra) on 15.4.1988, bringing solace to thousands of poor. Mass movements were launched by A.B. Krishi Mazdoor Sangh in Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Andhra, Bihar and other States for ensuring that the agricultural labour receives the prescribed wages as per The Minimum Wages Act. At Harnot (Bihar) Rural poor coming from 100 villages participated in the massive morcha and were successful in securing payment of outstanding arrears of wages.

With the efforts of A.B. Krishi Mazdoor Sangh, about 150 landless workers at Nagore (Rajasthan) were able to secure land for house building from Government. Since agriculture is a seasonal industry, labourers are unable to secure employment throughout the year. In lean season (at the end of agricultural season) lakhs of labourers are rendered jobless. One of the main reasons contributing to rural poverty, is the lack of employment throughout the year. Employment Guarantee Scheme and the Act, of Maharashtra Govt. (Employment Guarantee Act) enacted in 1972 deserves special mention. Under the provisions of this Act, Govt. has accepted the responsibility of providing work to rural labour, within 15 days of their demand, but the provisions used to remain on paper only, due to ignorance and absence of unity amongst labourers. Buldhana District in Maharashtra State was stirred with the numerous meetings, conferences, morchas etc. organized by A.B. Krishi Mazdoor Sangh since 1983 for securing work for rural unemployed.

On 15.4.1988, a massive morcha of ten thousand agricultural labourers was led to Collector's Office at Buldhana. Sangh was successful in securing employment for thousands of labourers from Buldhana, Dhule and Pune District, every year.

Another large class, suffering injustice and repression like agricultural labour is also in existence in India. It comprises of tribal forest workers. For generations these tribals living in forests are traditionally cultivating forest lands for their sustenance. However, as per Revenue Records of the lands, so cultivated, are not in their names. In the eyes of law, therefore, they are encroachers on these lands. As a consequence and due to the unholy alliance of forest and revenue officials and Forest Contractors, these unfortunate tribals are forcibly evicted from their lands. Buldhana Dist. Krishi Mazdoor Sangh resolved to stage struggle against this injustice and tried to build up a union of tribal labour. Tribals from 23 villages in forests of Satpura Mountain Range, in the district became members. The region reverberated with various meetings, conferences, morchas, and Dharanas and like movements held in this connection. Govt. was awakened from its slumber and in the large tribal gathering held at Sonala (Buldhana Dist.) on 2.6.85 under the auspices of K.M. Sangh. Title Deeds of 2000 acres of land were handed over to 200 tribals by the District Collector. For tribals, it was a salvation day.

Thereafter, the workers of Buldhana Krishi Mazdoor Sangh had to face a grave challenge, which they bravely accepted. Forest officers conspired to destroy standing crops worth ten Lakh Rupees in the fields of about 400 tribals who had not received such title deeds, declaring them as encroachers. With the help of armed police, forest officials planned to let loose 2-3 thousand cattle heads of Kathewaris, in such fields for destroying the standing crop. On receiving this stunning news, tribals contacted the workers of K.M. Sangh, at Buldhana, about 100 km away. On 5.9.1986, the Sangh leaders held a meeting of the tribals at midnight in dense forest. It was resolved to fight tooth and nail against this injustice. Next morning, about 1000 tribals assembled duly armed in the fields, along with women folk and children. In the face of such strong and firm opposition, armed police and forest officers took submissive stand and withdrew the Kathewaris and their cattle, after coming to an agreement with Sangh leaders. The standing crop worth Rupees ten Lakhs was thus saved. Sangh emerged triumphant (40).

What are the gains of this struggle ? Standing crop worth Rs.tenlakhs was saved and tribals felt assured of the support and backing of the Krishi Mazdoor Sangh and its leaders and workers.

They became confident that one day or the other, they would become owners of their lands, if they unitedly raise struggle under the leadership of Krishi Mazdoor Sangh.

The plight of thousands of daily wagers, in Forest Department was also pitiable like that of agricultural labour. Even after being in service for number of years they were not made permanent. Rajasthan Forest Workers' Union, affiliated to Rajasthan Krishi Mazdoor Sangh, organised such workers and staged Morchas, Dharanas, Demonstrations etc. at all District Head Quarters. On 17.8.1988, a colossal morcha of forest workers was led to State Assembly at Jaipur. As a result 25000 forest workers on daily wages in Rajasthan were absorbed in permanent government service. Thus the movement achieved glorious success.

#### 4. ULTIMATE AIM - NATIONAL INTEREST

We have discussed so far about the various Agricultural Labour Organisations, their ideology and organisational framework. It remains however, to be stated that the Trade Union movement among the agricultural workers so far, registered only a tardy growth. The number of agricultural workers who have joined the union is extremely small, which (in 1975) was only 1% of the total number of agricultural workers' households. Even today there has been no appreciable change in this respect. Because of their miserable socio-economic condition, enormous difficulties are involved in the task of organising the agricultural workers. Their different social roots, different castes and religious compositions, create many obstacles. They have not yet been liberated from the prison of twin concepts of Theism and Fatalism. By creating the spirit of self-confidence and national consciousness it is necessary to develop their understanding capacity to fight against injustice. The A.B. Krishi Mazdoor Sangh has been working strenuously in that direction. The response received so far amongst the Agricultural labour, though not very encouraging, still it is most significant and noteworthy in comparison with other trade-unions.

If history of movements and struggles of agricultural labour is any indication, it can be summarised that the people at large have displayed passive attitude. This may be due to the fact that political process as a whole revolved around power-centres and was concentrated only in large cities. So far, labour unions carrying their activities amongst agricultural labour, concentrated on the interests of classes and this may have inevitably contributed to this passive attitude. However, a gradual change though at a snail's pace, is being noticed in this attitude due to a comprehensive and sound philosophy based on national interest, followed by Krishi Mazdoor Sangh. Sangh workers are striving to increase the pace of this change.

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CHAPTER IV

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## EPILOGUE

India is predominantly a rural country, with nearly 80% of its population living in rural areas. In 1981, the number of agricultural workers in India was 55.50 millions among the total labour force of 222.5 million. Thus the problem of agricultural workers in a way assumes greater importance because of the sheer number involved.

The income from agriculture, no doubt, has increased considerably, because of the new strategy and technology adopted since 1960. But the benefits and fruits of this increased production and development have mainly gone to the upper and middle class land owners. The real wages of agricultural workers have declined. They are going deeper in debts. Despite the plethora of schemes and programmes, supposedly intended to ameliorate the conditions of poor, plight of agricultural workers has steadily worsened.

All India Agricultural Enquiries, the Rural Labour Enquiries and various seminars on agricultural labour, highlighted the main problems of agricultural workers namely, unemployment, under-employment, low wages, lack of amenities, inadequate housing, lack of organisation and problems of land. The main problem is that of unemployment and under-employment. Full days in a year of employment with wages, in agriculture, per agricultural labour are still below 250. All these factors have resulted in a low standard of living.

### **Comprehensive legislation required**

A considerable section of the agricultural workers comes from the traditionally oppressed groups of the population and they stand on the lowest ladder of the social and economic hierarchy in villages. This enables the upper class to use the various methods of exploitation and economic coercion. Whereas industrial workers succeeded through organised actions in getting various labour legislations passed, the rural workers, particularly the agricultural workers do not enjoy such legal protection. They remain to a large extent, exposed to the mercy of the land owners.

There is only one law applicable to the mass of agricultural workers. It is The Minimum Wages Act, 1947. But its enforcement is very tardy in almost all the States.

Taking into consideration the facts regarding the worsening living conditions of the agricultural workers, it is evident that there is an imperative need of enacting a comprehensive central legislation to protect the interests of the agricultural workers.

The question of such central legislation on the conditions of life and work of agricultural workers was under consideration of the Govt. of India since as early as 1975. Under the Janata Government rule in 1978, a Central Standing Committee on Rural Unorganised Labour was set up. In the meeting of the said Committee held on 9th July, 1980, the report of the sub-Committee on Central Legislation for Agricultural Workers was considered and approved. But in May, 1983, the then Congress Ministry decided not

to enact such legislation for agricultural workers. This was sheer betrayal of millions of downtrodden and oppressed agricultural workers. Hence there is an absolute necessity and urgency of enacting a comprehensive central legislation to protect the interests of agricultural workers and to ensure their job and social security.

Further, to ensure that such a legislation does not remain only on the Statute Book and that it is implemented in its letter and spirit for the benefit of the agricultural labour, it is necessary to build up their strong unions. For this purpose, the experienced activists of the trade unions in industries and organised sector will have to come forward and take up this challenging task. This is essential not only with regard to the implementation of the welfare legislation but also while implementing the different schemes and programmes formulated for the rural poor.

#### **Trade Unions to Organise Rural Poor -**

As we have seen in the foregoing discussion that various plans, schemes and programmes had been launched by the State and Central Governments, which are expected to lead to the progressive reduction, though not eradication of rural poverty i.e. N.R.E.P., I.R.D.P., etc. A large sum of thousands of crores of rupees had been allocated by the Governments for the implementation of the said schemes. But only a small fraction of the same has really reached the rural poor. Because of the high leakage ratio, the large portion of the allocated sum of crores of rupees had fallen into the hands of village mafias, goondas and petty leaders and it has aggravated to a considerable extent, rural inequality instead of reducing it. The eminent economist Prof. Raj Krishna said in his remarkable speech sometime in 1978, that in a sense rural development strategy was much more risky than the development of large scale industries. He said, "The delivery of small bits of resources to millions of poor house-holds spread over the vast rural land-scape of India is an operation which can lead to unprecedented wastage, misappropriation and corruption." Indeed his words proved prophetic as is evident from the various evaluation reports of the relevant schemes by research scholars and even Government agencies. Prof. Raj concluded, "The only insurance against this danger is the quickest possible unionisation of the rural poor in every block of villages. Only the unions of the poor can pressurise the administration to implement rural schemes without laxity and corruption."

But there are several imponderables in organising the different categories of unorganised rural labour. These impediments partly arise out of our social, political and economic system and partly out of the culture, the ethos and habits of the people to be organised. Few of those can be stated as below :-

- i) Imperfections in the market economy leading to uneven gains.
- ii) structural imbalance.
- iii) Poor infrastructure, such as low percentage of literacy and awareness leading to dependence of the rural poor on the affluent for a bare subsistence and hence the inbuilt fear on incurring their displeasure by getting organised.
- iv) A tendency to remain content with whatever is available without any high aspiration.
- v) The social customs and cultural moors.

vi) The attitude and perceptions of the rural people.

vii) Poverty and unemployment.

These are some of the important factors responsible for the slow process of organisation of the rural poor.

Against the above background, it would not be altogether correct to conceive of organisations of the rural poor merely as agents of collective bargaining for higher wages and better living conditions, as trade unions are understood in the conventional sense. These can at best be treated as superstructure which will have to be founded on the sub-structure of education, intensive orientation and training for creation of better socio-economic awareness.

This will help them to realise their own strength and weakness; as well enable them to give up fear and apathy. Endowed with these qualities, they will be able to assert themselves, grapple better with difficult situations, counteract the forces inimical to them and break the barriers of the culture of silence which is the result of their abject poverty.

However, rigidity of approach in organising the rural poor should be avoided and the type of organisation to be adopted should be situation-specific. In many cases, trade unionisation may be necessary. Specially in an excessive exploitative situation, trade union activities must be encouraged. In the case of landless labour, it must be kept in view that basically their problem is one of securing proper wages from the land owners. Even though minimum wages have been notified in various States, its enforcement is most unsatisfactory. Hence, in such cases unionisation of landless agricultural workers can be an effective form of organisation.

In certain circumstances the rural workers can be and should be organised on cooperative basis. It should be remembered that too much emphasis only on agitational aspects, which though desirable and essential, with practically little servicing activities, can only lead such organisations to a situation when they become only the handmaids of extreme political parties. Such organisations, while they do valuable work by drawing attention to the miserable plight of the poor, fail to achieve their real purpose. Too much involvement in agitational activities alone can lead to their politicisation and consequent division on political party lines. Agitations, though at times necessary should be seen mainly as opportunities for mass education, mass mobilisation and to create self-confidence among the workers. Hence, servicing activities and the emphasis on meeting the needs and requirements of the membership is very essential though it requires regular painstaking work. This object can be achieved by cooperative societies of rural workers.

#### **Role of urban trade unions**

Trade unions in urban areas can provide effective linkage to rural organisations. They can provide financial assistance to rural workers' organisations and provide leadership wherever required. The urban trade unions should extend assistance in terms of finance and leadership to a limited extent and not by way of charity or continuously spoonfeed them for ever.

If not for any altruistic reason, at least for their self interest the workers in the organised sector will have to come forward to assist the organisations of rural poor. The goods and services produced by them on a huge scale, with the assistance of modern technology, cannot be sold unless the rural masses have had enough purchasing power. This they can obtain only if they are organised and assisted to cross over the poverty line and reach a stage much, much beyond the present level of mere subsistence living.

The agricultural labour in India, through the centuries has suffered immensely. The poverty, exploitation and injustice he has suffered cannot be described fully and aptly by volumes of words. It has to be actually seen and experienced to be realised. The word 'Agony' only remotely indicates his life, for generations, full of sorrows and miseries.

Now, since last few decades, he is seeing a ray of 'Hope' on the horizon, the activists of 'Krishi Mazdoor Sangh', holding aloft a saffron flag, depicting the resolute fist clinching the wheel of industry as well as a twig of corn which symbolises the result of hard work as well as the joy and hope of the agricultural labour.

Only a united front of urban trade unions and strong, conscious organisation of rural poor can lead to our ultimate goal of strong, united and prosperous Bharat.

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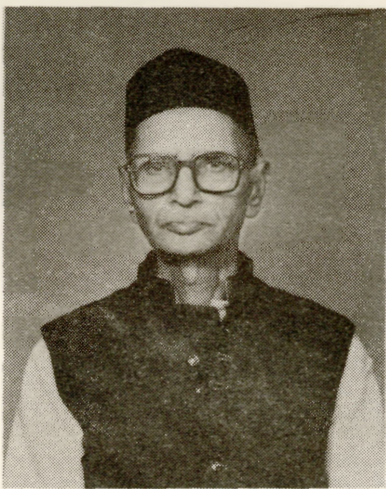
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[Information and data in this book is updated to the extent possible, till 7th five year plan]



### *About the Author*

Shri. M. G. Dongare (alias Bburao Dongare), born on 23rd May, 1918, acquired his Post Graduate Degrees of M.A. and LL.B. from Nagpur University. Though enrolled as an advocate, hardly ever he practised for pecuniary gains. Throughout his life, he took upon himself to advocate and defend the cause of rural poor. Since 1946, being a full time worker, as 'Pracharak' of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, he contributed his mite to build up a strong base of this nationalist organisation in 'Vidarbha' and 'Orissa'.

From 1963, as an active worker of Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh and Office bearer of many trade unions, he became the Vice-Chairman of Vidarbha Pradesh Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh. As a representative of workers' unions, from 1975 to 1981, he was a senator in Nagpur University. In 1978, during the study tour conducted by International Labour Organisation, he availed of an opportunity to have a close view of the trade unions in Italy, Switzerland and other European countries.

In the years 1978 to 1985, Baburaoji as a nominated member of the Committee for the Rural Unorganised Workers, appointed by Government of India, put forth various meaningful and valuable suggestions for ameliorating the socio-economic conditions of rural poor. He is an author of a Hindi Book - Khetihar Mazdoor - Samasya aur Nirakaran (i.e. Problems of Landless Labourers and the solutions thereof). Another book to his credit is in English 'the Struggle' (Agrarian Struggle by Adivasis in Buldhana District.) These have formed the basis of this exhaustive treatise, 'The Agony and The Hope' authored by him. He was an editor of Marathi Weekly, 'Sudarshan', published from Akola. For daily 'Tauran Bharat' of Nagpur he has been writing number of articles on various subjects of national importance and on the matters related to rural poor.

He participated in Goa-mukti Struggle (Freedom of Goa) and had to suffer imprisonment for opposing undemocratic measures imposed by Government of India during the 'Emergency Rule' in 1976. He has travelled extensively, all over India to observe and study from a very close quarter, the conditions of landless peasants.

While dealing with the subject of 'Land Reforms' and the efforts made after the independence to achieve the goal of 'Land to the tiller', the author has brought out the lacunae in the provisions of the Tenancy Laws and Land Ceiling Acts as well as in their implementation. The Landlords, Money - lenders, Bureaucrats and vested political interests created all sorts of impediments in achieving the national objective of 'land to the Tillers.' After mentioning the adverse effects of 'Green Revolution', on health, income and real wages of agricultural labour, author has detailed the achievements and failures of Vinobaji's Bhoodan Movement. Community Development Programme, Integrated Rural Development Programme and National Rural Employment Programmes were formulated by Government of India, as a part of its Five Year Economic Plans. Going through the details of all such schemes and programmes, author has opined with reasons as to how all these schemes and programmes have failed in ameliorating the economic conditions of agricultural labour. Having briefly described the role of peasants' movements before and after independence in India, author has dealt with the armed struggles and agitations launched by Naxalites, with the slogan of class war. Showing that the theory of Class Conflict and violent agitations had not had any impact on the efforts to bring about a change in the socio-economic status of landless labour in this country, the author ultimately concluded that the solution to the various problems of rural poor and especially agricultural labour, lies in educating them, mobilising their united strength to fight against injustice and imbibing in them the awareness that village as one family only, should work together in the national interest.

When 'Bharata' met 'Ramachandra' at 'Chitrakoot', Rama inquired of him thus, "Whether people settled in Koshal Province, where crop was always rich, are happy ? Whether you show special concern for the peasants, because the prosperity of a Nation depends on them."

*Ramayana*

Narada inquires of Yudhisthira, "Are you taking proper and due care of workers in your empire ? Whether you place full trust in them ? Prosperity of a nation rests on the co - operation of labour."

*Mahabharata*

"That wage which is just sufficient for satisfying the bare needs is termed (Madhyama) tolerable, that which can meet all the needs of food, clothing and shelter etc. of the family is said to be better (Srestha). Wages just enough for the sustenance of one person is regarded of a mean category (Hina)".

*Shukraniti*

"Under Muslim Rule, the Hindu Agriculturists had to pay nearly half of their agricultural produce to the rulers as land Revenue. In the period of Shahjahan's regime this share increased to 3/4th of the produce.

This kind of cruel economic exploitation of Hindu Agriculturists resulted into their pauperisation because of which they might have swelled the ranks of landless agricultural labourers."

*Ramswarup  
Mugal Period*

"All have equal right over land, as in the case of Air, Water and Light. Therefore, there should be equitable distribution of land."

*Vinoba Bhave*

"The struggle of the Krishi Mazdoor Sangh will be directed against injustice and exploitation. Sangh believes in the traditional Indian culture which recognizes all the community, as one family. It would not adhere to the principle of class struggle, which is anti - national."

*D. B. Thengdi*