

# Chapter-4

## Change and Development in Rural Society

India is primarily a rural society. Our economy rests on agriculture. The farmers' agriculture is not only an occupation but a way of life. This country has unity in diversity. Different regions and states have different features, e.g. Rajasthan is vibrant, famous for coloured clothes and spicy food. Punjab is famous for its fertile land.

### Festivals

- Bhogi, Pongal and Sankranti are to do with harvest and fall in the month of January in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh.
- Baisakhi is the harvest season in Punjab.

### Agriculture and Culture

- All food, festivals and clothes are connected to the land. .
- The main agricultural occupations are like carpenters, potters, artisans, sculptors etc.
- With the coming in of globalisation, many occupations have been introduced in schools (teachers), hospitals (nurses, doctors), post and telegraph.
- Many factories have been coming up and rural people provide labour there.

### Agrarian Structure

- Depends upon the land holdings amount of land a person holds.
- There is unequal distribution of land some people have lots of land and some people don't have any.
- The agriculture structure is how the land holdings have been distributed among people.

### **Types of Landholdings:**

1. Large Landers: Own large amount of land, earlier known as zamindars.
2. Medium landowners Small landowners: Have small amount of land and can make a profit.
3. Marginal landowners: These along with small family grow just enough for consumption of their family and do not have enough land to get surplus to sell in the market.
4. Landless landowners: Have no land of their own, work for others.
5. Tenants: Take land on rent and give the landowner a share of the profit.

### **Positions of women**

- Woman position is low, they can't own land.
- Women are usually excluded from ownership of land, because of the prevailing patrilineal kinship system and mode of inheritance.

### **Class and Caste Structure in Rural Areas Interrelated**

- Upper caste were considered to be upper class. But the issue in rural areas is complex
- Brahmins are the top most caste but not necessarily the wealthiest. The kshatriyas are upper caste as well as upper class.

### **Dominant Caste**

- After independence, land reforms introduced land ceiling. It set a limit of land holding by each individual.
- Large land owners sold away their land to medium land owners as they moved to urban areas to set up factories.

### **Proprietary Caste**

- Upper caste, rich people, large and mediums land owners controlled the resources and labour force in that particular areas.



- Begar-bonded Labourers: were illiterate and did not know how to do any skilled work.

### **Zamindari System**

- Zamindars collected the kind—rice, wheat, sugar etc. as tax from the farmers of the village
- For maximum exploitation of farmers, zamindars collected extra taxes.

### **Royal/Raiyat/Ryotwari System**

- One member of the family (joint family) was selected to collect the tax from the family and give it to the British.
- There was some exploitation, but very less—It was very successful in some areas.

### **Mahalwari System**

- Headman of the village collected the tax—It was much better than zamindari system.
- There were three problems the Ministers often faced:
  1. Poverty
  2. Imported grains
  3. Less productivity

Poverty and less productivity was during colonial period and imported grains was after independence. They came up with land reforms to solve these problems as well as to ensure social justice.

- After independence the gap between the rich and poor was very large.

### **Abolition of Zamindari System/Intermediately System**

- The exploitation of farmers by zamindars led to a lot of problems.
- The first land reform introduced was that the farmers would directly pay their tax to the government.

### **Land ceilings (productive land law ceiling, unproductive-high)**

- A limit as to how much land a person could own.



- If a farmer had 300 areas of land, 80 acres were given to the small, marginal farmers as 220 was the limit.
- The government imposed upper limit on the amount of land a person can own.
- Ceiling varied region to region depending upon how fertile the land is.
- In a productive area there was low ceiling limit, more land was taken from farmers.
- It was a big task for the government to visit each region and judge the ceiling according to facility level.
- In some areas it was successful, but not so in some areas due to Benami transfer the landlord wanted land to himself, thus he would put the land in the name of the women, accountant, distant relative only on paper it was so, but actually he owned the land.

### **Tenancy Reforms**

- Tenants are those who take land on rent.
- If the land has good productivity, the landlord wanted the land back.
- Government made lives of tenants secure by
  - (i) Security for tenants: For certain period, owner cannot take the land back, before period.
  - (ii) Regulation of rent: A certain amount of the profit was to be given to the landlord either he would pay or in the beginning he would not agree to paying money.
- Even if he made a loss and said he would give it to the landlord he would have to pay.
- One of the policies was that if the tenant showing production over a period of time and was regular in giving a part of his profit, he would buy the land.
- If he was unable to pay, at times the landlord could take away the land from the peasant.

### **Consideration of Land Holdings**

- The whole rural area was divided into sectors and each sector had various facilities provided by the government.
- A person from another sector could not use the facilities of another sector. They have to use the facilities of their sectors.

## **Land Records**

- During the colonial rule, there were barely any records.
- Later they were registered, maintained and was computerized.

## **Green Revolution**

- Green revolution was a devolution started in 1960's and 70's had a drastic change in the productivity.
- Introduced in those areas where there was a possibility of a water source and fertile land.

## **Social Consequence of Green Revolution**

### **Advantages:**

- First time India started exporting grains (rice and wheat), surplus.
- It was a great achievement for government but also for Indian scientists who created seeds.
- Employment opportunities increased, demand for agricultural labour went up.

### **Disadvantage:**

#### **Increased inequality in rural areas**

- Only rich landlords who could afford the HYV seeds could make profits.
- Lower class (agri- subsistence) did not have resources to produce surplus to sell in market for profit.
- Land taken away from tenants by landowners as they wanted to make extra profit rather than paying them. This was the displacements of tenants.

#### **Displacement of service class**

- All work which used to be done by manual labour was replaced by machines (harvesters etc.)

#### **Rich became richer and poor became poorer**

- Payment was shifted from land to cash.



- Instead of increase in wages, they decreased as there was so much demand for agricultural labour.

### **Green Revolution in Arid Areas**

- The crops shifted to multi crop from new crop. So that the profit was more (irrigation, HYV seeds).
- If the crop failed the farmer had nothing to fall back on in case of crop failure.
- Everything grown for commercial purposes.
- Increased insecurity of the farmer.
- It is divided into Andhra and Telangana. Andhra has two rivers – Krishna and Godavari Land is fertile. **Landlords in Andhra Pradesh are prosperous.**
- Hyderabad, the capital of Andhra Pradesh is in the center of Telengana and all development is done there only. Farmers of Andhra have sold their products in Hyderabad.
- Different regions have regional inequalities like UP and Haryana.

### **Diversification**

- There is a new class of people that has caused up entire pressure. .
- Group of landowners who invest agricultural money into small factories, invest in machines.
- They started: sending their children to school in urban areas, providing education.
- The hybrid seeds, pesticides have an effect on ecology.
- Fertility of soil is decreasing.
- Farmers prefer organic farming or natural products.

### **Transformation of Rural Society**

- Because of GR and land reforms.
1. Agricultural labour increased as agriculture is labour intensive. It was extensive lot of work involved on the price of land.
  2. Payment changed from kind to cash because government wanted uniformity or one scale of wage (minimum wage).
- It was easier to keep track as the payment in kind different from person to person.



- They moved from the hereditary relationship
- Loosing of traditional bonds farmers could move from their village to any other village and pick up work not bonded.
- The govt also contributed by developing infrastructure, electricity/water, cooperative society, irrigation facilities, bankmen, setting up of schools and hospitals etc.

### **Kerala and Bihar**

- In the 80's the Kerala economy got linked to the UAE economy.
- There was a need for minimal, manual labour (devices) who went from Kerala.
- They came back with a lot of wealth and their economy boomed.
- Keralites depended upon coconuts, fishing, but the new business ventures began adding to economy.
- Agricultural economy was linked to economies from industries.
- Kerala already had a booming fishing industry.
- Regions such as eastern UP and Bihar, where land reforms have not been effective, there has hardly been any noticeable change in the agrarian structure.

### **Globalisation, Liberalisation & Rural Society**

- In late 80's and 90's globalisation came to India.
- This led to competition among farmers.
- The organisation in charge for rules and regulations was the WTO, which led rules regarding prices, wages, taxes, aspects of trading, reduction of barriers.
- Indian trades are facing competition. Fruits, vegetables, clothes whole structure of rural area changed.
- A new concept was introduced in rural areas known as 'contract farming'

### **Contract Farming**

- The MNC's go to different villages and tell the farmers about their requirements.
- Some products which are popular such as potatoes, tomatoes, flowers, etc.
- The MNC's gave the Indian farmers seeds, fertilizers and the know how as to how they were to be used.

- These products were only produced for the MNC's either sold, made into sauces, jams, carved food (by being processed).
- The farmer is assured of an income and a profit.
- Very popular in some states (Punjab) and the land is fertile.

#### **Disadvantages:**

1. Farmers are growing the items, wanted by that MNC and if there is a crop failure there the farmer has nothing to fall back on.
  2. Insecurity among the farmers.
  3. Product will not be bought by MNC if product is not up to the mark. Only if it is up to the mark it is good.
  4. There is insecurity as there is total dependence on the MNC.
  5. We are moving away from production of grains, rice to producing tomatoes, potatoes.
- Once you grow tomatoes etc you cannot go back to producing grains.
  - The knowledge that the traditional farmers have is of no use, as the know how about growing these crops is given by the MNC'S.
  - Ecologically the soil gets eroded not very feasible and people are switching to organic farming.

#### **MNC'S as agents:**

1. Now MNC's are providing seeds, fertilizers to the farmers.  
Seeds etc are expensive but farmers have to buy them for contract farming.
2. Though the profits are high, the insecurities are also high.  
In case there is a crop failure, they do not have the government to fall back upon.
3. The govt cannot give loans at low interest rates as the MNC's are induced and they take charge.

#### **Farmers' Suicide—Small and Marginal**

##### **Reasons:**

1. The Green Revolution belt, small and marginal farmers wanted to increase productivity by increasing the use of advanced technology including tillers, tractors.





2. Unfortunately there may be a setback due to many reasons which can lead to farmer suicide.

**Factors:**

1. Withdrawal of subsidies and support price by government from farmers.
2. Now they have to borrow from other sources leading to debt traps. When they are unable to pay the money, at times they commit suicide.
3. Crop failure—Natural or manual failure, drought, heavy rain, pests, insecticides, etc.
4. Totally dependent on the market – when there is a crop failure, they have nothing to fall back on insecurity.
5. Besides production costs, there are other expenditures to be incurred. Education, dowry, medical care etc.

