

The Development of Land reform in Bihar

Smita Priyadarshini

Research Scholar

Department of History,
L.N.Mithila University, Darbhanga.

Abstract : In this paper we discuss about land reforms development in Bihar State. As we know Bihar, earlier known as one of the BIMARU states, has suddenly been in top news as a model for the country. The shot up in economic growth rate is making headlines these days in Bihar. The Bihar government riding the horse of neo-liberal development never stops to talk about development. However, all this comes to naught in the eye of the fact that the agriculture sector that employs around 70% of the working force has merely a 21.74% share in the GDP of the state. The development in agriculture is declining despite of enough water resources and very fertile land. Due to the transfer of farming land to the other sectors and government's attention moving towards horticulture in the middle of decreasing productivity, the rural economic system is in crisis. The irony lies in the fact that the government riding the horse of neo-liberal economic development starts talking about land reforms and even constitutes a commission to study regarding this. However, the state government exposed its character very soon when it denied even to accept the report prepared by its own commission.

Index Terms - Land reforms, Bihar, Agriculture, GDP, Constitute.

I. INTRODUCTION

Bihar is located between 24020'10" N to 27031'15" N latitude and 83019'50" E to 88017'40" E longitude. It has a geographical area of 9.416 million hectares and a population of 103.8 million (8.6% of all India) with population density of 1102 persons per sq km and literacy rate of 63.82% (male-73.89 and female-53.33) as per 2011 census. The Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) population comprised 15.72 and 0.91 percent of total population respectively (2001 census). Area wise, Bihar occupies 12th position in India. The state has 38 districts, having 101 subdivision and 534 blocks. The state falls under agro climatic zone IV (Middle-Gangetic plain region). The state is further divided into 3 agro ecological zones. Zone-I : North west alluvial plains, Zone-II : North east alluvial plains, Zone-III : South Bihar alluvial plains (further subdivided in to two (IIIA & B)).

Agriculture is at the core of Bihar's economy, employing 77 % of the workforce and generating 35 % of the state domestic product. With 88 % of the state's poor living in rural areas, improving agricultural performance and related rural non-farm activity is critical for improving livelihoods and reducing poverty. Major crops grown in Bihar are rice, wheat, maize, gram, red gram, sugarcane, potato & other vegetables. However, the agricultural sector in Bihar is plagued with numerous, and well known, constraints and problems. The present paper discusses the issues plaguing the agricultural sector in Bihar state, India and talks about the possible strategic interventions to make the best use of available resources adopting a multi-pronged strategy of development. It also talks about the area specific problems and suggests ways and means to tackle them.

It is a fact that the first step towards addressing the pauperized majority of Bihar would be to do away with the institutional hindrances of Agriculture economy. These hindrances in Agriculture are directly related to the poverty of Bihar. Various studies have proved that land reform helps in reducing poverty. A world Bank study (quoted in Thomson, p. 413, 2003) observes that implementing a land reform has a similar effect on poverty to a 10 percent increase in per capita income. Likewise, Bharat Dogra refers to a study by FAO which estimates the redistribution of only 5 percent of farmland in India coupled with improved access to water, could reduce rural poverty by 30 percent compared to what it would otherwise (Dogra 2002). According to land reform commission,

2008 ' it is evident that there is a structural bottleneck in Bihar agriculture due to a very queer pattern of land ownership and very extortionate system of tenancy at will which are causing great impediment to accelerated rate of agricultural growth'. But now world bank is not only against 'land to the tillers' but it is also in favour of market led land reform.

Table 1: Percent Distribution of Households and Area Owned over five major classes in Bihar

Year	% of land Holdings						% of area owned					
	Marginal (0<*<1ha)	Small (1<*<=2)	Semi- medium (2<*<=4)	Medium (4<*<=10)	Large (*>10)	All	Marginal (0<*<1ha)	Small (1<*<=2)	Semi- medium (2<*<=4)	Medium (4<*<=10)	Large (*>10)	All
Bihar												
2003	89.40	7.10	2.70	0.70	0.10	100	42.07	25.29	18.53	9.56	4.63	100
1992	80.56	11.10	6.00	2.14	0.20	100	28.58	23.84	24.45	18.68	4.44	100
1982	76.55	12.42	7.79	2.82	0.31	100	23.96	22.91	27.02	20.22	5.90	100
1971- 72	71.71	15.11	9.15	3.66	0.37	100	18.20	23.43	28.07	23.63	6.67	100
All India												
2003	79.60	10.80	6.00	3.00	0.60	100	23.05	20.38	21.98	23.08	11.55	100
1992	71.88	13.42	9.28	4.54	0.88	100	16.93	18.59	24.58	26.07	13.83	100
1982	66.64	14.70	10.78	6.45	1.42	100	12.03	16.49	23.58	29.83	18.07	100
1971- 72	62.62	15.49	11.94	7.83	2.12	100	9.76	14.68	21.92	30.73	22.91	100

Source : NSS Report 491: Household Ownership Holdings in India, 2003

The decreasing GDP ratio also shows the crisis like condition in Agriculture. As per the economic review 2010-11 the share of Agriculture in GDP has been reduced to 21.74 percent. Besides, landlessness is also directly related to poverty. According to the 55th round of survey undertaken by NSSO in the year 1999-2000, 76.6 percent of all the agricultural labourers in Bihar are completely landless. The condition of dalits is particularly grave in the matter of landlessness. The NSSO data of the same year shows that 23.8 percent of all households belonging to Schedule Castes were completely landless. Therefore, all these facts show that landlessness is directly related to poverty. In addition to this there is grave discrepancy in land-ownership. This fact shows the hollowness of the high sounding slogans of land reform. The NSSO Landholding Survey of 2003 (Report no. 491203) reveals the disquieting fact that in Bihar marginal and small farmers constituted 96.5 per cent of the landholding community holding 66 percent of land. On the other hand medium and large landholders constituted 3.5 per cent of the landowning community holding 33 per cent of land.. Within this category merely 0.1 percent landlords have ownership over 4.63 percent lands. This shows that landlords still own a considerable amount of land. *A 1937 study of pre-liberated china estimated the poorest 57.1 percent of rural Chinese households held 23.5 percent of the cropland, while the richest 2.6 percent owned 28.7 percent (Aspects of India's Economy-1)* when compared to the China of 1937 we can easily interpret the present situation of Bihar. Even more so when the landlords have had enough opportunities to transform their land as Benami.

Table 2 : Rural poverty Incidence and Shares by land Ownership

Land owned(ha)	50 th Round			55 th Round		
	% of rural population	Poverty incidence%	% share of the poor	% of rural population	Poverty incidence%	% share of the poor
No land	9	51	12	10	56	14
0<*<=0.4ha	43	51	55	53	46	61
0.4<*<=1ha	24	34	20	20	29	15
1<*<=2ha	15	28	10	10	30	7
2<*<=4ha	7	18	3	4	16	2
>4ha	3	6	0	2	18	1
Overall	100	40	100	100	40	100

Source : NSS 50th, 55th Rounds

In this situation land reform is the first major step that will liberate the productive forces. In absence of this any debate or effort of development and increase in agricultural productivity will be meaningless. Genuine land-reform in its ends the feudal and semi-feudal ownership and exploitation. It not only makes the vast populace participate in the economic process but also awakes them politically. It awakes the masses also towards democracy.

In 1930s a strong peasant struggle was built up under the leadership of Swami Sahjanand Saraswati. Abolition of zamindari was one important issue it raised. Apart from this the colonial government was afraid of the people's anger and drought situation in the various parts of the subcontinent. Ruling class' anxiousness can well be understood in the words of Suniti Kumar Ghosh, ". "The agrarian problem in India caused much worry to the U.S. imperialists, who had grown sadder and wiser after being driven out of China in 1949. To quote Chester Bowles, U.S. ambassador to India in the early fifties (and again in the sixties), they felt that *"In the coldest terms of stopping communism --- the democratic world simply must carry out these [land] reforms. Before communists can use the lack of them as an excuse to overthrow democracy"*. In 1952 he brought to India the foremost American experts in land policy, Wolf Ladejinsky and professor Kenneth Parsons of the University of Wisconsin. After making intensive studies of several states *"Ladjinsky reported that the bitter complaints of the peasants reminded him of similar complaints he heard in pre-communist China in 1946. The land inequalities, he said, were as bad as or even worse than he had seen anywhere in Asia"*. All this forced the ruling class do take up land reforms.

II. HISTORY OF LAND REFORM

There is a long series of land-reforms acts in Bihar. In the country the first zamindari-abolition legislation was introduced in 1947 in Bihar. The Bihar government passed the legislation even after the first president of nation Dr. Rajendra Prasad was against it. In 1950 Bihar land reform act was passed in the assembly. However as it was challenged into the High Court it was only in 1952 that the act got adopted. However the landlords were exempted from holding some of the land in the name of personal cultivation and in some other pretexts. The definition of personal cultivation was very vague. Herein personal cultivation did not mean farm work through one's own labor. It resulted into a way for the land lords appropriate to big land holdings through driving out the tenants, in the name of personal cultivation. The landlords were even allowed to hold farm land in the name of house, backyards, garden, pond, library and religious places. In addition to this they were allowed to have special land (land which they used for farm work either through their own cattle or laborers, or through hired cattle or laborers) and land for business

purposes, handicraft and storage. Even legislation so loosely chanted, was enacted after too much delay, by 1955 only 152 landlords were sent notice. In view of this delay this legislation was further amended and it was only by 1959 that notice was sent to all the landlords. The talk over zamindari-abolition started waking rounds as back as in 1947. However, due to the bureaucratic and legal nuisances it was hindered for several years. During this the landlords appropriated their land with *Furzi* and benami. There were 2,05,927 estates before zamindari-abolition legislation was constituted but the land reform committee had informed later that this act would affect 4,74,000 landlords. The landlords, to get away from land ceiling, divided their estates in so many parts. As per one assessment the landlords succeeded in keeping over 14% (around 15 lakh acre) of their land in the name of special category. In fact the landlords and the ruling class belonged to the same caste and class. As Anand Chakrawarti has noted." *Even a cursory examination of the land-control in the state during the colonial period shows the significance of caste for determining the pattern of agrarian exploitation. By and large the Zamindars and tenure holders belonged to the upper caste, the majority of who were Brahmins, bhumi-hars and rajputs. The upper layers of the tenant, Constituted typically by occupancy 'rai-yats' were also drawn from the same groups and to some extent from the upper layers of those classified as OBC*". This apart, the tenants were defined in a very strange way. The government under Zaminari abolition act worked in the interest of the uppermost strata of the comprador (middleman) class when it gave compensation to the landlords while it was the larger community of peasantry which had to bear its burden." So the whole exercise of zamindari-abolition not only helped the landlord in giving them enough opportunity to save their land with benami and furzy but it worked against the landless and the real farmers also. Peasants were encouraged to buy the land released during the abolition of Zamindari system. Accordingly only rich tenants could retain land and the smaller peasants simply lost access to it and became either tenants-at-will or landless agricultural workers. This apart in the number of agricultural workers in the wake of the final phase of land reforms was a manifestation of this reality (A.N. Sharma- EPW, March 5, 2005). All this shows that it were basically the upper farmers and the upper strata of the middle caste that benefited from Zamindari abolition legislations related to ceiling.

III. CEILING

Ceiling related legislations in Bihar came into existence on April 19th, 1962. After some amendments it was published in 1963. It had provisions to hold a maximum limit of land from 20 to 60 acreage, depending on the categorization of land. It had also provisions that the landlord, whose sons, daughters, the offspring of his sons and daughter or other such people will get the land after his death, has rights to give them and as gift. So the ceiling act too provides the landlords enough opportunity to keep land to themselves. This is a tragedy that only after 12 years of the introduction of the Zamindari abolition act the land ceiling act could be drawn which was liberal enough for the landlords to use it in their own interest. The landlords knew since the enactment of the Zamindari-abolition act that the land ceiling act would be chartered soon. During this period the landlords used each and every constitutional loophole to save their land from ceiling. Under the ceiling act landlords were allowed to hold land in different category of farm land, house, pastures and plantation. In the central governments land-reform committee meeting of June 26, 1964, CM of Bihar assured that they would reinvestigate the legislation and measures would be taken in the direction of acquiring enough land for redistribution.

The last phase of 1960s was replete with upheavals. In Bihar as well as in other parts of the country struggles began to surface. These struggles forced the government to amend the legislation. In 1971 and 1973 the ceiling limit was decreased. Now one household was assumed to be comprised of five members and the land ceiling was lowered down from 95 acre to 45 acre. However it didn't materialize. As far as the implementation of these acts are concerned landowners retaining ceiling-surplus land on 19 April 1962 were served notices in 1970 and there too only to 125

landowners in the first phase. According to the Revenue and land reform department's report 3, 67,808.24 acre land was acquired till October 2007 and 2, 71,138.3 acre land was distributed among 3,54,752 beneficiaries. 1175 cases to 1, 07,677.25 acre are still pending. The total acquired land is 475,485.49 acre. However there are various studies regarding the land coming under ceiling. In 1972 the contemporary revenue minister Chandra Shekhar Singh stated in the assembly that *18 lakh acre land would be acquired for distribution under ceiling act*. According to a study of LBS Indian Administrative Service Academy in November, 1990 based upon the agricultural census of 1970-71, this data is around 17.76 acre. Here the assumption of the ceiling was 30 acre and land was classified in only one category. On the basis of division of Bihar this data is around 17.76 lakh acre. As per this study 11.91 lakh acre land can be acquired. If we compared the distributed land from that can be acquired, the distributed land is quite nominal. Therefore this exercise also proved merely a sham show. Even under distributed land category the Dalits were discriminated. By the end of 1986-87, 581 acre land was declared to be surplus under ceiling act. 428 acre land was acquired and was distributed among 516 households. 238 acre of land was distributed among 320 SC households whereas 200 acre was given to 216 households belonging to other castes. Each dalit household got 0.71 acre of land whereas the households belonging to other casts got 0.92 acre land on average (Indu Bharti, E.P.W, Nov 26, 1988). This shows the caste biasness of bureaucracy in Bihar in the context of the ongoing tension and violence in Jehanabad district. According to a secret report sent by the district magistrate.

IV. BATAIDARI

Tenancy share cropping was also an important issue related to land reform. It was controlled in Bihar under Bihar tenancy act 1885. In addition to this some provisions were made in the ceiling act, 1961 in this regard under the Bihar tenancy act 1885. Tenant holding land, from a raiyat acquires rights on 12 years continuous possession. No occupancy under raiyats holding land on written leases are liable to ejection except on ground of non-payment of rent or improper use of land. Practically all the leases in the area are oral and according to the law, therefore the tenant could be ejected only if he did not paid rent or if didn't use the land properly (implementation of land reform report-1966). It was stated in the same report that all the leases were oral and legally justified. Yet, the tenancy act proved to be unsuccessful.

The land reform director of planning commission in February, 1965 visited the state. According to him *'crop-sharing is widely prevalent. According to the causes of 1961, about 25 percent cultivators were pent tenant pant owner. Cultivator and another 7.5 percent were pure tenants. Tenancy provisions are completely ineffective in practice. The tenants usually pay half the gross produce which in some cases goes up to 65 percent of the gross produce. The tenants were frequently changed to prevent from acquiring rights in lands. Generally very few tenants were recorded in the previous record operations in the field bujharat which has been done almost over the entire state during the past 10 years or more, only outries relating to owners were checked up but not of tenants (under-raiyats and share croppers);*

On July 10, 1964, instructions were issued by the Bihar government about the organisation of a special drive to record under-raiyats. The drive was to consist in two parts. The first field drive was to include completion of field bugarat and other records. The second field drives in which under-raiyats were to be recorded was to be taken up on December 1, 1964 and completed by March 31, 1965. The preparation work for the recording of under-raiyats was to be taken up as part of the first field drive. But subsequently, on the 12th September, 1964 the government issued a second letter (No. SD/208/64-8603 dated 12th Sept. 1964) which directed as follows:

"Reports have been received about the eviction of under raiyats and other agrarian disturbances. Government desire that ovary effort should be made to maintain peaceful relations between the raiyats and the under-

raiyaat and requisite steps should be taken to avoid any action which may give rise to disorder. In order to achieve the same, the collection of details to that extent should be kept in abeyance". This way the government itself stopped work over collecting records of under-raiyats.

In 1996 the Joint-front government came to power in Bihar. Mr. Indradeep Sinha of CPI became the Revenue minister. He issued circulars under the Bihar Tenancy Act and Home Stead Tenancy act under which he cancelled the earlier circular of 1964 banning the recording the names of share croppers in the record of rights, and he initiated a series of action for the protection of Bataidars and recording of their names. It immediately created a political crisis as the Jansangh, one of the constituents of the United Front, openly called upon 'the citizens and farmers of Bihar to defend their life, properties, farms and families with lathis in hand, instead of depending upon the police to defend them. "So this government also was not able to complete this task. In course of assessing the continuous ejection of the raiyats without taking cognizance of their complaints, the committee presided by D. Bandopadhyaya analyses correctly." *Bataidars have lost faith in the whole system of governance in the state. They are perhaps convened that they could get no relief from the system and therefore, they did not meant to waste their time, labor and resource chasing a mirage portents are dangerous. If they did not mean to redress their grievances through the legal process, then either they are so afraid and oppressed that that did not dare file any complaints against their lord and masters the land-owners or they have found out some alternate source where they could find some rough and ready justice*". In light of this assessment all the legal measures taken for land reform proved to be merely paper-work. After this period the Lalu Yadav government in Bihar also claimed to carry land reforms but later this government also retreated. When the Nitish Kumar government was formed, it constituted the land-reform commission but it did not even accept the report.

V. LAND REFORM COMMISSION (2006-2008)

The land reform commission studied in detail the land question in Bihar, and tried its best to do away with the loopholes that the landlords used in their interest. It prescribed the need of a full-proof system of village panchayats at its bare and the land reform commissions at the top whole. Talking about collecting the records of the sharecroppers and giving them receipts in course to defend them it said, that the landowner can sack the bataidar only when the land-owner himself farms the land or the children of the dead Bataidar don't want to cultivate the land. It was suggested that in condition of the bataidar himself bearing cost of production, he would be entitled to get 70-75 percent of the produce and in case the land-owner partially bears the cost the bataidar should get 60 percent of the total produce.

It was advocated in favor of reforming the ceiling act that difference between agricultural and non-agricultural land need to be overcome. It suggested fixing 15 acre ceiling for a family comprising five members and for all the religions institutions including the monasteries, temples and churches that were established before and in 1950. The commission come to the conclusion that by introduction of 15 acre ceiling the government would be able to acquire around 20.95 lakh acre land. The report says that on the basis of the 2001 census there are around 56.55 lakh farm labourers in 2007 of which 16.68 which comprise the lower most strata. If given one acre per head 16.68 lakh acre land will be needed. If any problem comes in way it can be reduced from one acre to 0.66 acre which will amount to 10.30 lakh acre. The commission advocated giving loans to the bataidars on the basis of receipt. The commission says that a legislation that includes all aspects of contract farming is needed so as to provide security to farmers, especially middle, small and peripheral farmers against their exploitation and repression by the corporate organization. Yet the government did not accept this report also.

VI. LAND REFORM & STRUGGLE

There has been a glorious history of peasant struggle in Bihar. 1930s has been a decade of militant peasant struggle under the leadership of Swami-Sahjanand Saraswati. It was the Kisan-Sabha led by Swami Sahjanand Saraswati that raised the slogan of zamindari abolition for the first time. In post-1947 few movements took shape led by the communist parties. It became quite clear by 1960s that the congress slogan 'Land to the tillers' and other government legislations was nothing but joke with the landless masses. By the end of 1960s the impact of 'Keynesian economics' all round the world was at the end. The world economy was standing on the tip of a crisis of new kind which worsened the condition of landless workers. During this period the debate between the communist parties added a new chapter in the movement going on in the country. Within the CPI (M) a new debate began under the leadership of Charu Majumdar which said that the Indian agrarian relation is semi-feudal. This showed a new path to implement the 'land to the tillers' slogan with full force. The landless peasants of Naxalbari in Bengal occupied the landlord's land. This struggle expanded to the various parts of country. In Bihar, the landless of Mushari and Punpun began to siege the crops of the landlords. During this period social boycott of the landlords was an important aspect of struggle. Besides the dalits and landless started occupying holdings which were over ceiling limits, and gair mazarua land. This struggle spread to Ekbari in Bhojpur district. In Ekbari the struggle started against feudal oppression. This movement which popularized was widely known as Naxalite movement began to strike with full force both upon the semi feudal base and its superstructure of the society. This struggle spread in the districts of Patna, Bhojpur, Muzaffarpur and in some other districts. The landless dalits whereas, felt relief from feudal oppression on hand, they felt a new kind of freedom. The semi-feudal forces tried to trample this movement but the landless labourers challenged it with armed resistance. Thereafter the feudal lords united and they were helped by the police and administration. Those who led the struggles were killed in fake-encounters. This movement lost its strengths to some extent due to the heavy repression till the middle of 70s. However, the movement helped in spreading a new form of democratic consciousness among the landless masses.

This new kind of democratic consciousness helped in organizing the resistance again. From early 80s the struggle took shape again in the form of anti-feudal struggle in many pockets of districts of Bhojpur, Patna, Jehanabad (Then Gaya). The struggle struck with full might upon feudal domination in the rural areas. The feudal forces responded with formation of several private militias. With direct support from administration they continued their attack upon the dalits. During this period in 1987 the police surrounded a peaceful meeting and fired indiscriminately in Arwal (Jehanabad district). 23 persons were killed and around 60 were injured in it. This was later called the 'Mini Jalianawala Bag' of 'Independent India'. When the police administration did not succeed in suppressing the landless dalits then with the help of feudal private armies they massacred the landless dalits. After this the ruling class propagated it to be as mere 'caste conflict'. In fact it was a 'class struggle because in the rural areas of Bihar there is found a thin line which divides the 'caste' and 'class'.

Table 3 : Land possessed (hectares) by social groups in Bihar

Social group	0.0	0.01- 0.40	0.41 - 1.00	1.01 - 2.00	2.01 - 4.00	4.01+
Others	6.0%	49.2%	23.0%	12.6%	6.1%	3.1%
OBC	8.8%	58.0%	19.5%	9.5%	3.5%	0.7%
SC	23.8%	67.1%	6.4%	2.1%	0.6%	0.0%

Source : 55th round NSS (1999-2000) ,report no. 469

The upper strata of upper and middle caste were the exploiters whereas dalits either were landless laborers or were share croppers. This shows the reason of mobilisation of dalits against feudal oppression. This movement put forward a new kind of politics and it tried to establish connection between the question of land & state power. It

resulted in weakening of feudal dominance in many parts of the rural areas in Magadh, Bhojpur and various parts of north Bihar. It raised the issue of wages. Wage struggles were waged in rural areas at a wide scale. Overall, a new type of political consciousness took shape among the landless labourers. Thereafter reform drive was taken at a large scale in these areas. These reform drives were used as a tool to repress the movement.

Table 4 : Percentage of households and average size of selling and buying of land, 1999-2000

	% of households selling land	Average land Sold(acres)	% of households purchasing land	Average land purchased(acres)
Caste				
Brahmin+Kayastha	26.51	1.22	7.83	1.34
Bhumihar+Rajput	30.68	0.93	9.09	0.85
Kurmi	17.86	0.24	17.86	0.76
Koeri	10.00	0.40	3.33	0.62
Yadav	9.62	0.33	13.46	0.95
Other backward 11	9.72	0.73	11.11	0.62
Backward 1	5.16	0.53	10.97	0.64
Scheduled Castes	1.99	0.20	4.48	0.52
Muslims	13.33	0.92	9.09	1.09
Class				
Agricultural labour	3.50	0.69	4.04	0.23
Poor middle peasants	15.38	0.38	15.38	0.41
Middle peasants	17.54	0.27	17.54	0.98
Big peasants	24.52	1.00	13.55	1.13
Landlords	29.73	1.03	12.84	1.17
Non-agriculturalists	5.22	0.72	5.97	0.29
Total	13.02	0.90	8.64	0.85

Source : A.N. Sharma – Agrarian relations and socio-economic change in Bihar, EPW march 5, 2005

However, in the first decade of 21st century the struggle weakened to some extent in the plains. The governmental reforms and repression both were its cause. But the basic issues remained the same. Nonetheless, the feudal dominance in the rural areas has weakened to some extent. When the struggle weakend in the rural areas the feudal lords began to snatch away land with support of administration from the people acquired earlier in course of their struggle. I found in Buxar- Bhojpur region that the landlords sold those lands to the middle caste people and the musclemans, earlier occupied by the landless masses during struggle phase. Fact that the question of land reform is directly connected to the question of state character. For your kind information, i must say that in course of my study in this regard in the rural area I was arrested and subjected to false cases that stopped me to complete my study.

VII. LAND REFORM AND THE STATE

The experiences up to now clearly show that question of land reform is directly in relation to the question of state-character. Legislations were formulated time and again but there had been no change in the pathetic condition of masses. Those who were instrumental in charting out legislation so far did not take any interest in implementing them albeit they became hindrance to this. *Land reform acts or legislations related to the payment of minimum wages were intentionally hindered as the politicians and beaurocrats of the state had hidden interests in it. Wherever the lower classes were mobilized politically in their own interests for enactment of the legislations they were suppressed brutally by the united force of dominant caste private mercenaries and the police* (EPW, April 28, 2001). And furthermore, after coming into power, the Nitish Kumar government dumped the Amir Das commission's report. The

connection between feudal private militias & every political party was exposed. Furthermore each and every ruling class party stood against the land reform issue. The police administration not only worked in collaboration of the landlords but also encouraged the feudal private mercenaries. It was an important strategy of the ruling class. All these feudal private armies were in fact a powerful tool in the hands of state machinery. *"The separation between ruling classes and state, characteristic of a bourgeois system, is far from being achieved in Bihar, landlords are not just a ruling class, getting the state machinery to their bidding, but are themselves part of, or extensions of, the state. The state machinery in Bihar comprises not only its official apparatus, but also the non-official apparatus of landlords and their armed gangs..."* (Nathan, 1996: 165)

In fact the Britishers had set up a system to accumulate surplus from rural areas. We should always keep in mind that a certain type of surplus accumulation needs a certain kind of political system. This political system tries to maintain that certain form of surplus accumulation. When the British went away from India the production relation in agriculture was still semi-feudal. The colonial exploitation turned into semi-colonial mode of exploitation. Thus the old production relations were retained in order to retain the imperialist interest. Now, as it was imperative for the new (old in essence) political set up to maintain the old agrarian production-relation, therefore it did formulate legislation under pressure of rebellion but never implemented it. The old exploitative set up was maintained with nominal changes here and there.

The landlords extract heavy surplus from agricultural activity & later they hand it over to the big capitalists. This way the surplus generated in agriculture becomes a tool of the import-export industry in form of capital. In this process the imperialist forces take their own share. So the landlords work as an ally for the big capital. The semi-feudal forces, rich peasantry, village lenders and the landlords who through farming tools, misappropriate surplus, are also connected with semi-feudal relations in the rural areas. In this process a new type of landlordism is taking place of an old one which acts alike when it comes to exploiting and suppressing the poor peasantry. This has become a general trend for the last twenty years. Apart from this in post-1947 period various political parties came to power, even those who claimed to represent the backward and dalit communities yet all of them were alike in their practice. All ruling class parties not only stood against the land reform commission's report but tried to mobilise the upper caste against land-reform drive. This shows the unity of the ruling class parties against land reform.

In fact one of the main causes the worsening condition of the farmers has been to maintain the semi-feudal and semi-colonial exploitation. Semi colonial conditions maintain the semi-feudal relations. Thus it is not possible to end semi-feudalism in semi-colonial conditions. It means that semi-feudal forces, imperialist forces and big capital controls and retain this whole exploitation set up. So the important question is whether the ruling class would work against its own interest? The biased stand taken by the ruling class proves this fact.

One another thing that needs to be understood, is that the government holds nothing against land reform per-se only it is wary of giving land to the poor. The government has never backed away from land reform which favours big corporations and big capital. It is using its full might to do away with all the legal provisions which become hindrance in providing land for the corporations. Recently the firing on the part of the police in Farbisganj in Bihar proves this assessment. When the state fails in maintaining peace with the help of constitutional measures the ruling classes unleashes the private militias & gangs which use their brutal repressive might. It is commonly known in rural areas of Bihar. Legislations have been used as tool to confuse mass movements. This can be understood from a speech delivered by India's first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru in Nagpur Congress' congress, he said. *"though the imposition of ceiling would affect only an infinitesimal minority of landlords, and though its actual practical gains would not be much, the sentimental gain would be tremendous"*.

All these facts shows that there is no constitutional measure left for land reform. The people's struggle is the only way to get the ownership of land. Therefore it is quite clear that struggle for land needs to be extended to the question of state.

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