

REVIEW ARTICLE

**Land Reforms - A Bus that India Missed Which
May Never Come Again***

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Three decades ago, Simon Kuznets (1973) in a perceptive address observed: "...a substantial economic advance in the less developed countries may require modifications in the available stock of material technology and *probably even greater innovations in political and social structure*. ... and many specific characteristics will be so dependent upon the outcome of the social and political innovations that extrapolation from the past is extremely hazardous" (emphasis added.)

Indian political leadership at least at the top was not unaware of this. In fact, this awareness in respect of agrarian reforms¹ was in evidence even before Independence. It was rightly perceived that such reforms were needed both in the interest of fast economic growth and social justice, and to release the productive capacity of peasants as well as to eliminate their poverty. Mahadev Govind Ranade (1842-1901), who is described as the father of Indian Economics, clearly recognised that development of Indian agriculture had to be based on small peasant capitalism for which he suggested the necessary agrarian reforms. These reforms were intended to end the helplessness of tenants through suitable tenancy legislation to secure their rights, substantial reduction in land tax and provision of cheap credit (see Dasgupta, 1993, pp. 100-107). His ideas left a deep mark on the Indian political leadership. The Indian National Congress even before Independence had to have its base among peasantry and announced its commitment to abolish feudal intermediaries and initiate land reforms. Other political parties too, particularly the left parties, were deeply and actively interested in land reforms. It reflected a good consensus on ending feudalism and making agrarian structure more egalitarian and democratic, besides making it more productive. Legislative measures were initiated in all the states soon after Independence - a process which continued for several decades.

* The three books covered by this review article are: *Land Reforms in India: Intervention for Agrarian Capitalist Transformation in Punjab and Haryana*, Vol. 6, Edited by Surjit Singh Gill, Sage Publications India Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 2001, pp. 249, Rs. 495.00; *Land Reforms in India: Issues of Equity in Rural Madhya Pradesh*, Vol.7, Edited by Praveen K. Jha. Sage Publications India Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 2002, pp. 427, Rs. 680.00 and *Land Reforms in India: Performance and Challenges in Gujarat and Maharashtra*, Vol. 8, Edited by Ghanshyam Shah and D.C. Sah. Sage Publications India Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 2002, pp. 520, Rs. 880.00.

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A voluminous literature has been generated in the country to assess the implementation of land reforms and their impact on agrarian structure and agricultural development. The Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) sponsored a survey of trends and perspectives in land perspectives and research in the field as early as 1970s, which was ably accomplished by P.C. Joshi (1975). Joshi's work covered the first phase of land reforms before the 1970s, while the second phase of land reforms initiated since the 1970s needed a critical and comprehensive survey.

This need must have prompted the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA), Mussoorie, to launch a series of very useful studies on Land Reforms in India, which have been very well received by academics. The volumes under review here are sixth, seventh and eighth in the Series respectively on Punjab and Haryana together [Gill (Ed.), 2001], on Madhya Pradesh [Jha (Ed.), 2002], and on Gujarat and Maharashtra together [Shah and Sah (Eds.) 2002]. Like other volumes in the series, these are also edited volumes bringing together a collection of perceptive articles on the respective states and amount to very useful contributions to the literature on the theme. They give a good background of land reforms by presenting the variety of systems of land tenure, critically examine the provisions of the land reforms legislations and their implementation and also the factors behind implementation, and analyse how the agrarian structure has changed as a result in the respective states. The states covered by the earlier volumes in the Series are Bihar, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, and Karnataka. One of these volumes, viz., the fifth, covers the country as a whole [Sinha and Pushpendra (Eds.), 2000]. Studies by authors other than under the Series are also significant and are too many to be named here. States like Kerala and West Bengal, which are relatively more successful cases, have been covered by them. This is not an occasion to review them all. They will, however, be kept in the mind while reviewing these three volumes together.²

It may be useful to recapitulate that the first few years of land reforms in different states had a thrust towards abolition of *Zamindari* and other similar dysfunctional feudal systems. This was followed by abolition of hereditary titles to village offices like Patel, Shanbhog and Patwari (Krishna, 1997, pp. 17-18). These early legislations abolished only the upper layers of feudalism, who were urban based, and recognised the superior tenants as the legal cultivators or owners. The 'inferior' tenants who were tenants-at-will lost whatever tenancy rights they had (Das, 2000; Joshi, 1975). The more parasitical layer of feudalism which had strong rural roots and had a firm hold over land could not be touched, and these were the persons whose support was vital for most of the political parties except probably the Communist parties. Social justice was not probably uppermost in the mind of legislators. It was more urgent to get rid of unproductive and even dysfunctional landlords.

But social justice could not be ignored for long, thanks mainly to peasants' movements in many parts of the country and the support they received from the leftist parties. It was felt necessary to take the wind out of their sails. The next step in land

reforms therefore was aimed at imposing ceilings on large holdings, siphon off the surplus land and transfer it to the landless and marginal farmers. If this step were successful, it would have substantially reduced poverty, given of course complementary measures like cheap credit to support the weak. This phase of legislation was during the period 1955-71. Its implementation, however, was *hypocritical and insincere*. There were many loopholes in the Ceiling Acts, and nothing significant was achieved by way of transfer of surplus land to the landless and marginal farmers.

The failure of land reforms from the point of social justice was attacked widely both by academics and leftist parties. Both the Central and State Governments seemed too weak to enact and implement any radical legislation as the political parties depended on the support of the dominant castes which controlled both land and votes. By 1972, however, the political situation qualitatively changed. Indira Gandhi had succeeded in riding back to power with a landslide victory on the slogan of *Garibi Hatao*. The victory over Pakistan and creation of Bangladesh made her powerful to an unprecedented degree. The whole country was at her feet as it were. The eminent artist, M.F. Hussain, painted her picture as goddess Durga. Even Jawaharlal Nehru himself could at no time have so much power. To her credit, Indira Gandhi realised that this was the right time to push through more radical land reforms. Calling a conference of Chief Ministers in July 1972, she made them to commit themselves to such reforms, and National Guidelines were framed for the ensuing legislations in the states. It was thus that the second phase of land reforms were initiated since 1972. This was really a golden opportunity to significantly reduce poverty, if not eliminate it altogether. The political situation was most favourable because Indira Gandhi seemed to derive her political strength directly from the masses, without having to depend on the rural political bosses. On the contrary, it was the latter who depended on her for political survival. Such a favourable situation for implementation of Land Reforms was never to occur again.

The main feature of the land reforms in the post-1972 phase was a considerable lowering of the ceilings compared to the earlier phase. The National Guidelines (1972) suggested the ceilings at as low a level as 4.05 to 7.28 hectares in government irrigated lands growing two crops, 10.93 hectares in irrigated lands growing one crop, and 21.85 hectares for dryland. A provision for a slightly higher ceiling was suggested in privately irrigated lands. The legislations in the states conformed to these Guidelines. However, they also had significant loopholes which allowed retrospective transfers, division of family on paper to circumvent ceilings, and exemptions for plantations. What such ceilings achieved by way of transfer of surplus land to the landless and marginal farmers can be seen from official figures themselves: At the national level, only 2.09 per cent of net operated area was declared as surplus by the year 2000, of which only 1.51 per cent of net operated area was actually distributed (quoted in Deshpande, 2002, Table 5).

As far as tenancy was concerned, the National Guidelines did not insist on the abolition of tenancy, but only on providing security of tenure, fixing fair rent and

keeping record of tenancy. The oral or informal tenancy was to be abolished as it made the tenants vulnerable and such contracts had to be recognised and made official. This at least was the spirit of law. But the states enacted legislations in different ways, and some of them - like Karnataka, Gujarat and Bihar - abolished leasing subject to certain exemptions as in the case of persons with disability, public servants with a salary not exceeding Rs. 250 and widows. Madhya Pradesh abolished only the past leases, but not the future ones.³

Regulation of tenancy had a great potential to reduce poverty, since most of the tenants-at-will and other small tenants were vulnerable and poor and tenancy legislation was to provide them security. What actually took place, however, was quite the opposite. Poverty actually increased as a result of such tenants losing whatever rights they had. The legislation intended to provide security to actual tillers ended up by making them absolutely insecure. Where, however, tenants or 'peasants' movements were strong, the benefits of land reforms did go to them. One can see a variation even within a state in this respect. Narinder Singh Sandhu's paper (Gill, 2001) on peasant movements in PEPFU (Patiala and East Punjab States' Union) shows clearly that land reforms were more effective there in bringing benefits to actual tillers both in respect of tenancy reforms and in the implementation of ceilings. In Karnataka also, land reforms were more successful in Uttara Kannada and Dakshina Kannada districts for the same reason (see Joshi, 2000). Across the states also, the same factor played an important role in making Kerala and West Bengal fare better than other states. Shah and Sah (2002) in their editors' Introduction, therefore, rightly observe: "One of the important reasons for the failure of various land reforms measures is relatively weak pressure from below" (Shah and Sah, 2002, p. 28).

Not only did tenancy legislation fail on the whole, except for success here and there in pockets as observed above, it did not even anticipate a new development that was taking place under its very shadow - the reverse tenancy! The traditional pattern of tenancy was that of a landlord leasing out land to several small cultivators. A radical and social justice oriented tenancy legislation should have not only provided security to such small tenants, but should also have enabled them to lease in land from larger holders so that the former could enlarge their holdings and make them viable. What actually happened in the wake of capitalist transformation of agriculture [as Gill's (2001) volume confirms] was that the dominant land holders themselves started leasing in land from small holders to reap economies of scale from mechanisation of agriculture. This new development was witnessed right in the early 1970s or even a little earlier (Nadkarni, 1976). It is interesting that this development took place along with the tendency to resume land for self-cultivation by the owners which was allowed in law. Both these developments became a prominent feature of the agrarian scene in Punjab and Haryana, especially with the onset of the Green Revolution as Gill's (2001) volume reveals. Between the two, reverse tenancy seems to be less harmful from poor tenants' point of view, because they are not outright evicted as in the other development. It appears that outright eviction of tenants was

more prominent in the initial years upto at least the mid-1960s. It is not clear whether reverse leasing was initially voluntary or under compulsion/strong persuasion by bigger holders. Anyway, the small and marginal farmers soon found that such leasing out provided a scope to seek more viable job opportunities outside their meagre holdings (granting of course that these opportunities were available). In Punjab and Haryana, such opportunities were available within agriculture itself, thanks to their success in Green Revolution.

In contrast to the Punjab-Haryana situation, Madhya Pradesh conforms to the classical pattern of tenancy. This is seen from the informative and well documented paper by Mihir Shah and P.S. Vijay Shankar in the volume edited by Jha (2002) (see especially p. 374, Table 15.3). It is the small holders who lease in relatively more there, but the total area under lease is itself small (7.3 per cent of owned area). Abolition of tenancy only led to concealing it in Madhya Pradesh. This is not surprising because in a situation where even land ownership records have large gaps, how could one expect systematic and updated records of tenancy? As per law, a tenant working in Madhya Pradesh with the same landowner for more than one year is entitled to occupancy right and if he works with the same landowner for a period of three years, he is entitled to ownership right. It is hardly surprising that this could not be implemented, as revealed through the study by the Land Reforms Unit. Three factors were responsible for it: "administrative apathy", "absence of voluntary and activist organization" among peasants, and lack of awareness among tenants about legal provisions (Jha, 2002, p. 130). The Land Reforms Unit recommends that the relevant provisions of law should be widely disseminated in Hindi. Even if this is done, unless both political leadership and administrative machinery are committed to it and unless tenants themselves are organised, the landowners may lease out land for only a short term if at all, or conduct cultivation through only casual hired labour, to circumvent the law. The same motive of landowners also explains the prevalence of concealed tenancy.

The agrarian structure of Madhya Pradesh does not seem to have responded to the economic forces of Green Revolution as much as Punjab and Haryana. The Green Revolution itself has not been as prominent in Madhya Pradesh as in the Punjab and Haryana. It appears from both the volumes that the more agriculturally advanced regions have a larger extent of tenancy than the less advanced, apparently because of the prominence of capitalist reverse tenancy. This is seen both from a comparison of Punjab and Haryana, on the one hand and Madhya Pradesh, on the other, and also from a comparison between regions within Punjab (see R.P. Singh and S.S. Grewal's paper in Gill, 2001, p. 205). R.S. Deshpande's paper on Maharashtra shows clearly that the state is similar in this respect to Punjab and Haryana. He observes that 73 per cent of the leased in area is in the holdings of above 4 hectares. Almost all land leased in (98 per cent, to be more precise) for more than 12 years is also in these larger holdings (Shah and Sah, 2002, p. 110). However, K. Gopal Iyer points out that the overall incidence of tenancy is low in Maharashtra. This statement is problematic

since he also points out that there is considerable concealed tenancy at least in parts of Maharashtra (Shah and Sah, 2002, p. 215). Tenancy provides the necessary flexibility to attain viable size of holdings and take advantage of economies of scale without sacrificing ownership and the sense of security and prestige that comes from ownership. It is market driven and when it is banned it only results in a black market.

If this is so, we have a significant lesson to learn from these books. In the advanced and growing areas at least, it would appear to be a retrograde, unfair and also unrealistic step to abolish tenancy altogether. It is more important to recognise it and provide security of ownership to small holders leasing out land, so that those who cannot cultivate their small holdings do not have to lose them but can still benefit from them. In the less advanced areas, on the other hand, where labour is relatively more abundant and small and marginal farmers do not have work opportunities outside their holdings, forcing them to continue to cultivate them however tiny they may be, they should have incentives and encouragement to enlarge their holdings by leasing in more land to make them viable. In fact, such measures are necessary in the advanced regions as well, so that the small holders lease in more than the large holders and a more egalitarian agrarian structure develops through leasing in. Abolition of tenancy pre-empted such a possibility. Though of course the market forces tend to prefer reverse tenancy, abolition of tenancy makes the small holders only more vulnerable. The role of state intervention should be to protect the small holders and to encourage them to end their poverty, and not to make them more vulnerable.

On the whole, as Gill's volume shows, the political factors were clearly favourable to big landlords who could easily thwart land reforms. S.S. Gill and R.S. Ghuman's paper quotes the late D.C. Pavate, Ex-Governor of Punjab, who observed in 1974 that "despite ceiling laws, there exist 500 big landlords owning and cultivating land between 200 acres and 1000 acres each" (Gill, 2001, p. 42). Even as late as 1987, the Punjab unit of Bharatiya Khet Mazdoor Sabha (BKMS) estimated that "there were 1725 landlords, each owning land between 75-100 acres and 744 landlords each owning 100-125 acres and 588 landlords each owning land above 125 acres" (Gill, 2001, p. 42). Since this was mostly irrigated land, a substantial surplus in excess of ceilings would have resulted for transfer to the landless and marginal farmers. In an inequitable situation already, reverse tenancy made the land shift even more to big holders' control. Not surprisingly, according to Gill, the basic goal of land reforms in Punjab and Haryana was to facilitate capitalist transformation of agriculture and improve its productivity, and not redistributive justice (Gill, 2001, editor's Introduction, p. 18).

The story of Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra could not have been very different in this respect. The Land Reforms Unit's Report frankly admits: "The administrative machinery has been able to identify a few large landowners owning ceiling-surplus land, but a number of big landowners have not been adequately

captured within the ceiling net, due to the gaps in the land records and also due to the apathy of the revenue administration" (Jha, 2002, p. 116).

The story of how the ceiling legislation was subverted in Maharashtra is quite interesting as it is typical of how ceilings were implemented in the country at large. This story is told here by R.V. Bhuskute (Shah and Sah, 2002). When faced with resolute instructions by Indira Gandhi for strictly implementing the ceiling law, the Vasant Rao Naik Ministry simply declared in advance that the Ceiling Act was going to be amended, giving a welcome hint to the big landholders to transfer their excess lands and evade the law before the law was passed (Shah and Sah, 2002, p. 76). It is now common knowledge that these transfers were only on paper, being *benami* and fictitious, and the real control was unaffected. Another way to evade the ceiling law was for the cash rich ministers, doctors, lawyers, and political leaders to simply purchase land in different villages, thus exploiting an important loophole in land records. The village being a unit for land records, they have information only about how much land a person has in a particular village but not what he or she has in other villages. If farmers have lands in different villages all below the ceiling limit in each village, there is simply no way of knowing who has excess land and how much. Bhuskute thus calls the ceiling law a mere formality (Shah and Sah, 2002, p. 73). In the circumstances, it is a wonder that some little land was indeed identified as surplus. This could perhaps be at least partially explained by the fact that in this wonderful land of ours such laws can be selectively implemented in the case of political adversaries and political light-weights - which can demonstrate that we do mean to implement law where we want! If some credit could be given to tenancy legislation for achieving at least a partial success, the ceiling legislation was by and large a dismal failure. It was not so much a case of mere inefficiency as it was of deliberate mischief and hypocrisy.

Even where some surplus lands were declared as we noted above and distributed to the landless, the impact of such land transfers on ending the poverty of beneficiaries was problematic. First, lands so transferred were of low quality and higher risk, and needed significant investments to cultivate. Secondly, adequate support to the beneficiaries in making extra investments needed was not forthcoming. This fact comes out clearly in the volume edited by Shah and Sah (2002).

The role of the caste factor in the implementation of land reforms (and their failure) receives considerable attention, especially in the Shah-Sah (2002) volume. Ghanshyam Shah's own article in this volume is perceptive. Land reforms were so implemented as to suit the convenience and interests of the numerically and politically dominant castes. The urban based and politically weak 'high caste' absentee was easily eliminated, but the benefits of tenancy reform and ceilings did not go to those at the lowest rungs of the caste hierarchy who were politically the weakest as it did not suit the interests of the dominant 'intermediate castes'. The central leadership may have been strongest in the early 1970s, but it was still not

strong enough to change the political structures at the local levels. These structures were hardly serious about land reforms.

The land situation in Punjab and Haryana is different from that of Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra in important respects, apart from dissimilarities in the tenancy situations. First, the bulk of agricultural land in Punjab and Haryana is irrigated, allowing intensive cultivation. In the other three states, drylands dominate, agriculture is more unstable, yields are lower, and cropping intensity also is low. The volumes under review do not, however, bring out the implications of such diversity for land reforms. Secondly, while forests and common lands are insignificant in Punjab and Haryana, it is not so in Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra. Thirdly, there is also a significant proportion of tribal population in the latter three states dependent on forests and common lands, which is not the case in Punjab and Haryana. These factors raise different issues in Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra, not found in Punjab and Haryana.

Thus Jha's (2002) volume as also the volume edited by Shah and Sah (2002) devote considerable attention to these issues also, apart from conventional issues of land reforms. In fact the former issues have now become more relevant and urgent. The issues of displacement by dams, dispossession, and rehabilitation also get attention. B.D. Sharma's paper (Jha, 2002) in this respect is especially enlightening and useful. Harsh Mander's paper on tribal land alienation is also equally valuable. N.C. Saxena's paper critically reviews forest policy since Independence. Ensuring access to forests and common lands for those dependent on them for livelihood and also their sustainable use require evolving innovative institutional mechanisms like the Joint Forest Management, beyond what was envisaged under conventional land reforms. This is not an easy task, given the inequitable agrarian structure, thanks to the failure of land reforms. There is thus a link between conventional issues of land reforms and the issues of common lands. In the volume edited by Shah and Sah (2002), there are as many as eight papers out of fourteen, covering the problems of tribal alienation, displacement and deprivation of people including mainly the tribals, and their struggles for justice. These problems emerged both in Gujarat and Maharashtra more so in the former. These papers are all well documented, analytical and also touching as they involve intensely human issues. It is to the credit of both Jha's (2002) volume and the one edited by Shah and Sah (2002) that the conventional as well as the new land related issues are brought together and discussed in depth.

One cannot help feeling depressed at the end of reading the three volumes, certainly not because of any shortcoming in them, but because of their success in vividly exposing the failure of land reforms in delivering social justice. Indian leadership had been vociferously talking of land reforms and social justice much before Independence. No other programme in India perhaps received as much political and legal attention. There were quite a few excellent opportunities in terms of favourable political situation, particularly so in the early 1970s. Yet these opportunities were missed. *Failure* of land reforms is an under-statement. What the

style and substance of implementation did was to *aggravate rural poverty among the bulk of small cultivators* by reducing them to the status of insecure landless labourers, though of course there are success stories here and there, thanks more to peasant movements than to governments. The opportunity for securing social justice through land reforms, such as the one we had in the early 1970s, will not come again. The political as well as the economic situation has drastically changed, becoming even more unfavourable to land reforms. (This should not be mistaken as growing irrelevance of land reforms.) It may be more realistic to say that the political leadership and bureaucracy in India were hardly interested in *catching the bus for social justice via land reforms*, though it was a shorter and a more direct route. What the leadership and bureaucracy preferred was a more roundabout and longer route through economic growth. This longer route seems to have been so comfortable for the ruling elite that the destination of social justice is likely to be conveniently forgotten and the journey may be continued forever. The journey has become an end in itself.

Is there no scope then for land reforms at all in future? Have they totally lost their relevance? As contributors in Jha's (2002) volume indicate (see especially Mihir Shah and P.S. Vijay Shankar), the ownership holdings are becoming smaller, agricultural labourers with land are increasing in number, and more and more holdings are becoming economically non-viable, thanks both to population increase and slow growth of employment opportunities outside agriculture. In the circumstances, reverse tenancy may prevail more and more even outside irrigated regions like Punjab and Haryana, as it has already been doing (cf. Nadkarni, 1976; Jodha, 1981). As Gill (2001) suggests, the task of protecting the small owners thus becomes urgent to ensure that they do not lose ownership in spite of leasing out. However, there is now a clamour for Economic Reforms in agriculture too, the main component of which is stated to be to remove ceilings on holdings and allow big holders to purchase non-viable holdings. The champions of such Reforms hope/claim that such a step will bring in so much investment into agriculture that the increased employment opportunities will take care of the displaced small owners. However, this can also take place without removing ceilings, as reverse tenancy can still achieve the same purpose. But why sacrifice the security of small owners in the process? They can as well be allowed to lease out and yet get some benefits of owning the land. And why should only the big expand? Why not also the small and the marginal? Why should the state abdicate its responsibility of encouraging them to make their holdings viable and invest more in agriculture? In the present circumstances of holdings being more and more sub-divided and becoming smaller, is it not logical that agricultural policy should be more oriented towards the small and marginal farmers rather than to the big? Almost every advanced country in the world, including the high priests of market forces and capitalism, have considered it their duty to support family enterprise in agriculture especially the small farms and have significantly subsidised agriculture. Welfare costs of not doing so can be unbearably

high, which cannot be counted in money terms. We do not have to be more loyal than the king himself.

Though development strategies for small and marginal farmers have been in operation for a long time now, they have not had the desired impact. This is because the odds are against them in production, credit, marketing, population pressure and probably even in politics. To generate surplus land for transfer to the small and the landless in agriculture in the present context, one of the ways could be that persons who may originally have been farmers but have started earning incomes from urban sources above a certain level (say, a lakh and a half rupees per year), should be made to surrender the ownership of their holdings in favour of small and marginal farmers and landless labourers in agriculture.⁴ However, no seriousness can be hoped for in any further steps in favour of the rural poor, unless the rural poor themselves effectively organised to achieve their goal. All the three volumes emphasise this point eloquently. On the whole, these volumes hold a clear mirror to what has happened to land policy and land reforms in the country, as the experience of the states analysed so well by them is also indicative of what happened in the country as a whole. They are, therefore, immensely interesting, especially for the valuable lessons they offer.

An interesting point about these volumes reviewed here should not go unnoticed. They contain contributions also by scholars other than professional academicians, apart of course from those by eminent academicians. I am not referring here only to distinguished scholar-administrators like N. C. Saxena and NGOs. I was particularly struck by the clarity, precision, ruthless frankness and scholarship in the article by R. V. Bhuskute. Congratulations to the Editors for catching such a person in their net.

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NOTES

1. *Land reforms* can be distinguished from agrarian reforms, insofar as the scope of the latter is wider covering not only abolition of intermediaries, ensuring security of tenure, and ceiling on holdings which land reforms cover, but also consolidation of holdings, providing adequate and inexpensive flow of credit to agriculture, and reducing the burden of land tax. Improving the market access for farmers and ensuring them a better share in consumer price can also be considered as part of agrarian reforms, though the term is not generally used to include the market aspect. In the literature on agrarian/land reforms, the distinction between the two terms is not always clear and consistent.

2. There are at least three interesting and comprehensive papers giving an assessment and overview of land reforms in India: Rao (1992), Das (2000), and Deshpande (2002).

3. For variation in tenancy laws across the states, see Deshpande, 2002, Table 2.

4. I have discussed elsewhere in detail the relevance and scope for land reforms in the present context (Nadkarni, 1997).

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