

Land Reforms in India

[UPSC Notes]

What are Land Reforms?

The term "land reform" refers to the reforms made in the fields of land ownership and land regulation.

- Also, simply, we can say that the redistribution of land by the government from the landowners to the landless people is called land reform.
- Because India is an agrarian economy with a scarcity of wealth and an unequal land distribution pattern, there is a strong economic and political case for land reforms.

History of Land Reforms in India?

The history of Land Reforms in India can be divided into two phases:

The Pre-independence period

- In the pre-independence period, farmers didn't own any land. Rather, the land they cultivated the crops on was owned by the zamindars and Jagirdars.
- The land was held by a few rich people, and there were a good number of intermediaries who didn't have any vested interest in cultivation.
- Seizing of lands was a common practice and records of lands were terrible, which led to a slew of lawsuits.
- The land was divided into small sections for commercial farming, which eventually decreased the productivity of the land.
- The boundary disputes and the boundary lands resulted in inefficient use of labor, capital, and soil.

The post-independence period

- To investigate the land issue. A committee was formed under the chairmanship of JC Kumarappan.
- The agrarian reforms were strongly recommended in the report suggested by the Kumarappa committee.
- Later abolition of intermediaries, tenancy reforms, a fixation of ceilings for land holdings, and consolidation of land holdings made up the land reforms for independent India.

- As a result, they were implemented in different stages to establish a political will in order to make these reforms accepted nationwide.

Need for Land Reforms in India

The need for Land Reforms in India is-

- Peasants were afraid of being evicted
- Poverty was ingrained in farmer's class
- Extreme peasant indebtedness
- Formation of a class of wealthy individuals who exploited poor peasantry

Objectives of Land Reforms in India

Land distribution has been part of India's state policy ever since the British rule of India. This process started first with the abolition of the Zamindari system, and hence it proved to be the most revolutionary land policy of independent India. The major objectives of bringing Land Reforms in India were:

- To remove the stone wallings that have been in the agricultural structure for many generations.
- The second goal of the Land Reforms in India was to remove all the elements that were hindrances to the agrarian system.
- The third main objective of land reforms was to give this security to the soil tiller and make sure to provide the quality of status and best opportunities for all the sections belonging to the rural population.

Components of Land Reforms in India

The Land Reforms in India had four major components. These are:

Abolishing the intermediaries:

- The first thing that was abolished was the zamindari system, which ultimately reduced the number of intermediates who were between the cultivators and the buyers.
- This abolition of the intermediate was of great advantage as it helped to remove the parasitic class and a large amount of land was given to the government for distribution among the landless farmers.

Fixation of ceilings on landholdings:

- In simple terms, this means that the area of land provided to each cultivator was limited beyond which they could not hold any extra land for their farm.

- In 1942, the Kumarappan committee tested the recommendations for the maximum size of land that a landlord could hold, which was three times the capacity of an economic holding and sufficient for a family.

Tenancy reforms:

- The tenancy was another major problem, as, during the British period in India, the cultivators were supposed to pay between 35 and 75% of the gross production throughout India.

Consolidation of landholdings:

- Consolidation means the redistribution of the portions of land into one plot, which results in consolidated land holdings.
- In Punjab and Haryana, the consolidation of land holdings was compulsory, whereas in other states it was voluntary. Soon after that, nearly all the states accepted this consolidation, except some parts of Andhra Pradesh, Tripura, Nagaland Kerala, Manipur, and Tamil Nadu did not apply to this reform.

Impacts of Land Reforms in India

The impacts of Land Reforms in India are as follows:

- **Agricultural Productivity-** Due to Land Reforms the wasteland belonging to big farmers/ Zamindars remained uncultivated. As a result, there is an increase in the area under cultivation which leads to food security.
- **Social Equity-** in the rural economy, whoever has control over the land, has the power. In a land-scarce country with a huge amount of rural population below the poverty line, Land reform ensure that everyone has a minimum amount of land to ensure financial stability. It also reduced the inequality among the villagers.