



Land Reforms for Dalits: How Much of The Promises Have Been Kept?

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ABSTRACT

Despite phenomenal progress in the industrial, service and knowledge sectors during the last 67 years of our independence, the economy of our country continues to be primarily agrarian in nature. Even today, the largest number of both the total workers and the rural work force in India are engaged in agriculture. This profession is almost totally land-based. No wonder, land ownership pattern is a major determinant of the health of the economy of our country, more so of our rural areas, where even today, nearly 70% reside. Even in the British times, it was recognised that the land ownership pattern in India was rather skewed and heavily loaded in favour of certain social groups. The then rulers attempted to 'rationalise' the ownership structure, but could never stem the discontent brewing among the deprived sections of society. It was only in independent India that conscious efforts were made to ensure a measure of justice to the actual 'sons of the soil'. How far have these 'land reform' legislations succeeded in bridging the socio-economic divide and facilitated a more equitable distribution of land? This paper will seek to examine this issue with respect to the erstwhile State of Andhra Pradesh – now bifurcated into Andhra Pradesh and Telangana States.

KEYWORDS

Dalits, landlessness, absentee landlordism, bhoodan and marginal holdings

Introduction

Even after 67 years of independence, the largest number of total workers (56.5%) and 72.5% of the rural work force in India are engaged in agriculture (Ministry of Finance, 2007). Land is a major determinant in the economy, society and polity of the country. Ownership of land is not just about holding an asset. It is the veritable gateway to: a degree of financial security, social status, power and even a sense of identity. A number of studies bring out that, due to their inability to provide collaterals like land documents, many rural folk are denied loans by financial institutions to meet their immediate needs. No wonder, such persons become easy prey for the loan sharks.

It is in this context that, in recent times, the issue of ownership of land, especially by the Dalits (the hitherto deprived sections of society), has assumed special significance. The Constitution of India has, in its various Articles, spoken about the need to improve the lot of the downtrodden. Successive governments (even in British India) have passed a spate of legislations on land-related issues. Yet, landlessness continues to be a major issue, especially in rural India. It is pleasing to hear of slogans like 'land to the tiller', but what is the situation on the ground? Even when a person is shown on the records as the owner of a piece of land, the moot question is: is he always the one who is actually deriving full benefits from it? Have financial constraints and heavy indebtedness, etc., reduced him to the state of being a landless labourer on his 'own' land? Added to that is the spate of suicides by farmers, who are unable to sustain themselves on the uneconomic land-holdings.

Who are the major players who have tended to make a mockery of the noble intentions of the framers of our Constitution, or brazenly flouted the provisions contained in the legislations, by latching on to the loopholes in these? These 67 years of independence have seen a sea-change in the social fabric of our country. The hitherto deprived sections of society can no longer be expected to silently accept the injustices being committed on them as something 'divinely ordained'. Today, they are more articulate. Hence, there is an urgent need to make a sincere endeavour to understand all the underlying issues and address these in a fair and equitable manner.

In India, around 87 per cent of the landholders among the SCs/STs belong to the category of small and marginal farm-

ers (Agricultural Census, 2005-06). About 64 per cent of the SCs/STs are either workers or agricultural labourers, and the percentage of agricultural labourers has increased from 57 per cent in 1961 to 78 per cent in 2001. Due to fragmentation of land ownership, the average size of operated land has declined from 1.19 hectares in 1975-76 to 0.8 hectares in 2005-06. In Andhra Pradesh, the SCs/STs, who constitute 16 per cent of the state's population, control only 7.5 per cent of the total operated land (Diwakar, 1999; Mungekar, 1999).

The above evidences bring out quite clearly the historical impact of the customary restrictions on the ownership of agricultural land. A large section of the SCs/STs do not have enough access to agricultural land and other capital assets even today, and therefore continue to depend on wage labour for earning the major portion of their household income (Throat, 1996). As per the estimates of the Tendulkar Committee, poverty among the SCs/STs in 2009-10 was 23.5 per cent in rural areas. Land is one of the basic and important factors that help enhance all economic activities, to come out of the poverty circle, and reduce vulnerability. Therefore, the Government of India has systematically endeavored to protect and promote the rights of the SCs and STs with regard to the control and use of land through land reforms. However, the reforms were not successful and the majority of the SCs and STs are still landless. In this context, an attempt has been made in this paper to examine Dalits' access to land in Andhra Pradesh during pre and post independence periods. And it also an attempt to assess the impact of land reforms on land ownership by Dalits in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

Methodology and Data sources

The data used in this paper has been collected from secondary data. The secondary data would include: Population Census of the then composite state of Andhra Pradesh 1991, 2001, and Statistical Abstract of Andhra Pradesh, 2009. Data on landholdings for the years 1976-77, 1980-81, 1986-87, 1990-91, 1995-96, 2000-01, and 2005-06 were collected from "A Report on Census of Land Holdings" (published by Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Govt. of Andhra Pradesh) and for the SC/ST land holdings data collected from "A Report on Land Holdings of SC/STs" published by Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Govt. of Andhra Pradesh. Chief Commissioner of Land Administration, Govt. of Andhra Pradesh. Simple percentages have been calculated for the effective analysis

and clarity of data.

Land and castes in colonial Andhra

Land is the prime factor that determines economic position and social status in rural India as well as in any State in India. Since long people from the dominant castes have been enjoying this privilege and those from lower castes are excluded from this social and economic benefit. Those who have a meager percentage of land struggle to retain tenure over land.

During the colonial period the land was under Ryotwari, Inamdari and Zamindari systems was set up to facilitate the collection of taxes for British rulers. Zamindars in Andhra were basically "rent-receiving landlords" who exercised ownership rights on the land and other services without undertaking any care of land supervision or cultivation of land. In terms of caste, the Zamindars in Andhra were a mixed a lot.

The landlord class in coastal Andhra Pradesh primarily consisted of the Non-Brahmin upper castes, i.e., the Kshatriya, the Velma, the Reddy, the Kamma. There were few Kshatriya Zamindars mainly found in Vishakapatnam District (the Maharaja of Vizayanagaram and others). The important Velama Zamindars, who controlled extensive areas, included the kings of Panagala, Bobili, Venkatagiri, Pittapuram, Mirzapuram and Nuzvidu. The estate holders of Challapalli, Vuyyavrmuctyla, etc, were Kammas, while the Mungala Zamindar belonged to the Reddy Caste.

The landlords of the Ryotwari region were also overwhelmingly from the non-Brahmin upper caste Reddis in Rayalaseema; Kammas, Rajus and Reddis in Coastal Andhra; and primarily Velamas in the Telangana region. Brahmins primarily possessed the Inam lands, also known as Agraharams granted by the rulers. By and large, in many Inams, there had been a separation between ownership and cultivation. Because of the considerations of pollution (untouchability), the Brahmin landowners did not till the land themselves, but leased out to non-Brahmin tenant cultivators. Shifting from rural to urban areas the Brahmins easily entered into service sector. Due to urbanisation of the Brahmins and their entering into the service sector they sold the inam lands to the tenant peasants.

Some of the micro level studies observe that due to the shift of Brahmins from rural areas to urban and their entry into service sector compelled them to sell off their land to upper caste communities in Andhra. A study of an Agraharam Village in Krishna District observed the following factors, which were responsible for the decline of Brahmin dominance over land: (a) Land legislation and tenancy problem (b) Increase in urban employment opportunities (c) Conspicuous consumption and large number of dependents.

It also observed that there was a significant shift in land ownership pattern during 1930 to 1982. The Brahmins, who held 77% of the total land in 1930, were left with only 3% by 1982. Another village study in the Rayalaseema area shows that the ownership of land by Brahmins declined from 36% in 1891 to 3% in 1982. Village surveys in some other districts of coastal Andhra, i.e., Vishakapatnam, Guntur and West Godavari also confirm that Inamdari land has been rapidly passing from Brahmins to other Upper Castes. By the first decade of the twentieth century, all three forms of settlement Zamindari, Inamdari and Ryotwari systems – led to the concentration of lands in the hands of a few non-Brahmin dominant upper caste people.

Dalits status in colonial Andhra

In the traditional Hindu hierarchical society Dalits were called Panchmas or Harijans and were socially, economically and politically a suppressed people. Placed at the bottom of the caste hierarchy, they survived by performing functions like scavenging, leatherwork, etc. During the colonial period, they constituted the bulk of the agricultural labour force and worked as farm servants and casual labourers (Omvedt, Gailt, 1994, Satyanarayana, 2004) most of the Dalits were dependent upon

their tradition work for their subsistence.

Very few (less than 10%) Dalit families possessed agricultural land. They had no right to own land, nor were they considered to be peasants or tillers of the soil. The existing social customs did not grant them the status of occupancy tenants, though they might have cultivated lands as tenants and sharecroppers. In the case of untouchables, therefore, there was a clear correspondence/correlation between social and economic status.

It is important to note that during the colonial period, people started a movement for the equal distribution of land and against the Zamindari system. Most of these land struggles were led by the Communist Party. In Andhra region, the struggles were under the umbrella of 'Andhra Rastra Raitu Sangam,' whereas it was under the banner of 'Telangana Sayuda Poratam' and 'Andhra Mahasabha' in Telangana Region. As a fact these land struggles could not help the Dalits to enhance their landownership status and most Dalits continued to remain as agricultural landless labourers. However, these struggles did effect some change in their lives, especially in the matter of wages.

Historical view of Land Distribution Pattern and Economic Conditions of Dalits

In the four-tier India Hindu society, caste plays a very important role in the social equations. The upper strata in the caste hierarchy were enjoying all the economic, social and political luxuries, while the lower strata were denied opportunities to get even a measure of equality with the upper strata. In the traditional Hindu hierarchical society, Dalits, also known as Panchmas or Harijans, were socially, economically and politically suppressed people. The Dalits mostly subsisted by engaging in occupations like scavenging and leatherwork (G. Nanchariah, 1988, Anand Teltumbde 1997). Moreover, they were neither allowed to own land, nor take land on lease. This trend was continued till the British rule. During the British period significant changes took place in the socio-economic conditions of Dalits. For the first time in India, the right over land was restored to Dalits during the British period but for different reasons. A commission was appointed in 1891 by the Madras Presidency to study the conditions of the Pariahs (SCs or Dalits) and got the positive report to assign the lands to Dalits. The policy of assignment of land to Pariahs started from 1918 in every Ryotwari village. Land was assigned for these depressed groups not only for cultivation, but also for building houses, establishing schools and for forming small Pariah settlements. Land assigned for cultivation rose from 19,251 acres in 1920-21 to 3,42,611 acres in 1931. On the other hand, significant changes occurred in the land revenue system and created new intermediaries, i.e., Zamindars, Ryotwars and Inamdars between the State and cultivators in British India through the Permanent Settlement Act 1793 (Dharma Kumar 1992, Satyanarayana, 1998).

In the Zamindari system, land was under the control of individuals, who never cultivated it, nor supervised cultivation. The Zamindars restricted themselves to collecting rent and paying taxes. Under the Ryotwari system, the tillers of the land enjoyed hereditary and transferable rights, and paid taxes to the government. The Inam lands, also known as Agraharams, Shrotriyams, were mostly granted to the Brahmins. The British colonial government also confirmed 'property rights' to the owners, through the Inam Settlement Act (1859-61). The intermediary landlords also belonged to the non-Brahmin upper castes and there was no chance for the depressed/untouchable castes. Due to the concern of British rulers, a meager percentage of Dalits acquired the land, but the majority of them continued to be agricultural landless labourers. At the end of colonial period, there was significant unequal land distribution in India. It was observed that on the eve of independence, more than 40% of the area in the country was covered by intermediary tenures like Zamindars, Jagirdars and Inamdars and the rest was under the Ryotwari system. Thus, there was a large disparity in the ownership of land (Satyanarayana, 1998).

Implementation of land reforms in post-independence India and Andhra Pradesh

After independence, land reform measures were taken with the main objectives of abolition of the intermediary system between the state and the tillers; imposition of ceiling on agricultural landholdings and consolidation of landholdings and adoption of modern techniques in agriculture. Consolidation of land and ceiling of landholdings were important measures adopted by almost all the states of the Union. The actual implementation of land reforms rests with the state governments and legislative measures enacted and adopted in this regard vary from state to state suiting to local conditions and requirements (G. Nancharaiah, 2000).

As a part of national economic policy after independence, the Andhra Pradesh state implemented several land reforms to eliminate the intermediary system which existed in the state. The Andhra Pradesh, formed on 1st November, 1956, had three distinct regions: Coastal Andhra, Rayalaseema and Telangana. Today, the Telangana Region is a separate State. In each of these regions, there are variations with regard to the landholding pattern, fertility of soil, cropping pattern, irrigation and rainfall. Even within a single region, there are significant variations (A.M Kushro, 1958).

The Telangana region was under the rule of Nizam of the former Hyderabad state from 1920 to 1948. About 60% of the land was under the Ryotwari revenue system and the rest, under the direct control of the Nizam and the feudal landlords such as Jagirdars, and Makthadars. The non-jagirdar areas were controlled by the Deshmukhs and Deshpandes. All these resulted in a phenomenon known as absentee landlordism. The Telangana region has the highest proportion of tenants in comparison to other two regions and the ownership distribution of land is much more uneven than in the other regions.

The coastal irrigated area, known as Coastal Andhra, were marked by high population density, and ownership of land has generally been restricted to less than half of the households, and a large proletariat has existed. The Rayalaseema region, which is a part of the Andhra area, has a high incidence of tenancy and large number of poor owning small plots of land. In terms of caste, the Zamindars in Andhra were a mixed lot. The landlord class in the Coastal Andhra Pradesh, where the Zamindari system existed, primarily consisted of the non-Brahmin upper castes, i.e., the Kshatriya, the Velma, the Reddy and the Kamma. The landlords of the Ryotwari region overwhelmingly belonged to the non-Brahmin upper castes: Reddys in Rayalaseema, and Kammas, Rajus and Reddys in Coastal Andhra, and primarily Velemas in the Telangana region.

Keeping in view these peculiar conditions of these three regions, the Andhra Pradesh government has implemented several reforms like Andhra Pradesh (Andhra Area) Estates Land (Reduction of Rent) Act (1947) Andhra Pradesh (Telangana Area) Tenancy and Agricultural Lands Act (1950), Andhra Inams (Abolition and Conversion into Ryotwari) Act (1956), Andhra Tenancy Act (1956), Andhra Pradesh Ceiling on Agricultural Holdings Act (1961) and Andhra Pradesh Land Reform (Ceiling on Agricultural Holdings) Act, 1972. As part of land reforms, the government distributed the surplus land made available from land ceiling (G Nancharaiah 1988, Sukumar Das 2000). As on March 31, 2002, about 53.98 lakh acres had been distributed among 56.52 lakh landless people at all India level. The land distribution per beneficiary in the SC category household comes to 0.977 acres, which was less than the corresponding 1.047 acres for non-SC/ST households (National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights, 2008). On the other hand, as on September 30, 2004, an area of about 5.29 lakh acres was distributed among 5.82 lakh beneficiaries in Andhra Pradesh. Of these, 41.51% were SCs; 17.7%, STs; 32.9%, BCs and OCs, 8.01%. It is estimated that all efforts taken together, including bhoodan (land donated by landlords) and distribution of government wasteland, accounted for less than 10 percent of the cultivated land in Andhra Pradesh.

Analysis of data available on land holding patterns - with special reference to Dalits

It could be seen from Table 1 that the marginal holdings constituted 46.6% of the total operational holdings, but controlled only 9.3% of total operated area in 1976-77. Small holdings constituted 20.3% of total holdings, but controlled 12.8% of total operated area. Marginal and small together constituted nearly 67% of total holdings, but controlled only 22% of the operated area in 1976-77. On the other hand, medium and large holdings together constitute about 15% of total operational holdings but controlled more than 56% of total operated area during the same period. This indicates that the distribution of land was skewed in 1976-77. By 2005-06, there was a tremendous increase in the number of marginal holdings. Their percentage share in total holdings increased to about 61.5%, but the area operated under their control increased to only 22.68% of the total operated area. On the other hand, the number of medium and large holdings declined to 5.43% of total operational holdings, but constituted nearly 25.09% of total area. If we take large holdings alone, their share is only 0.5% of total holdings, but constituted nearly 6.5% of the total operated area in 2005-06. This clearly indicates that although the number of medium and large holdings declined, the area under their control has not been declined proportionately. On the other hand, the number of marginal holdings increased from 46.6% to 61.58%, but the operated area under their control was only 22.68% of the total operated area in 2005-06. This implies that in the post-independence period, inequalities in the distribution of land has increased despite land reforms. The increase in the marginal holdings may be attributed to population explosion and also to redistribution of small tracts of surplus land and waste land to the weaker sections. But medium and large farmers could retain large size of holdings as land reforms were not properly implemented. More than this, during the post-independence period land has passed to owner-cultivated classes, but not to the landless poor.

Table 2 shows that in 1976-77, SC households constituted about 13.4% of the total SC holdings but controlled only 6.9% of the area, while others constituted about 80.3% of total holdings, but controlled 87% of the total operated area. By 2005-06, the SC holdings declined to about 11.80% and their controlling area share slightly increased to 7.84%. While the percentage of holdings of the 'others remained the same, i.e., 80.7%, their operated areas share slightly declined to 84% of the operated area. In 1976-77, ST operational holdings constituted 6.3% of the total holdings and 6.2% of the total operated area. By 2005-06, their holdings increased to 7.69%, while their share in area also increased to 8.36%. The average holdings of Scheduled Tribes also increased - more than the average land holdings of Scheduled Castes (Table 5).

It can be seen that from Table 3 most of the SCs landowners have been small marginal farmers. In 1976-77, marginal and small holdings of SCs constituted 83% (controlling nearly 46% of the total operated area of SCs) of total holdings and their percentage significantly increased to about 91.5% (controlling nearly 66% of the total operated areas of SCs). In 2005-06, on the other hand, medium and large holdings declined from 4.7% (control nearly 29% of the total operated area of SCs) to 1.36% (control nearly 10.59% of the total operated area of SCs) during the same period and their average size of holdings also significantly decreased from 1.19 hectares to 0.80 hectares during the same period (Table 4). Due to lack of irrigation facilities, high cost of cultivation, high cost of mechanisation, the vulnerable sections of society started losing control on their lands.

Land Distribution

Keeping in view the land situation, soon after independence, the commitment of the State towards land reforms was in a sense, set out in the Constitution itself. Article 39 of the Constitution, which is a part of the Directive Principles of State Policy, laid down that the state shall direct its policy towards securing the ownership and control of the material resources

of the community such that they are distributed best to serve the common good. Article 38 of the Constitution also envisaged a social order in which the inequalities in status and opportunities are eliminated and disparities in income are minimised. The very first Amendment to the Indian Constitution was, inter-alia, undertaken in order to validate the Bihar Land Reforms Act of 1950.

It was during the early fifties (1950) that a policy on land reforms was evolved by the government at the central level. The first authoritative outline of a national policy on land reforms, including a ceiling on agricultural holdings, was clearly set out in the first Five Year Plan (1951-1956). This plan emphasised the objective of land reforms in terms of the social aspect of land policy, such as reduction of disparities in wealth and income, elimination of exploitation, provision of security of tenure to tenants and workers, and finally, providing equal status and opportunity to the different sections of the rural people over a period of time. The subsequent Five Year Plans continued to emphasise on land reforms, and thus a comprehensive land policy evolved, which included abolition of intermediaries, tenancy reforms, imposition of ceilings on landholdings, distribution of the surplus land, allotment of government land, consolidation of holdings, and protection of the lands of the SCs/STs. This is because after the formation of the then Andhra Pradesh State, the Reddys, Kammas, Velamas and Kshatriyas emerged as economically, socially, and politically powerful people as they controlled nearly 90 per cent of the land, while the SCs and STs remained as landless agricultural labourers as they were denied access to land.

In order to bridge this gap, the Government of AP took initiatives to redistribute lands among the landless poor. An attempt has been made in this paper to present the patterns of land distributed among the landless poor by the Government of Andhra Pradesh from 01-11-1969 to 25-01-2005 in different phases spread over four time periods.

Table 6 shows that from 1969 to 2005, about 9,88,474 acres were distributed among 6,87,018 SC families, while in the case of ST families, about 12,46,839 acres of land was distributed among 8,52,972 beneficiaries. A significant extent of land was distributed in Anantapur (1,37,311 acres among the SCs and 1,71,846 acres among the STs) and Nellore (1,00,338 acres among the SCs and 1,17,921 acres among the STs), while a lesser extent of land was distributed in the irrigated delta regions such as East Godavari, West Godavari, Krishna, and Ranga Reddy districts—the extent of distributed land was less in Ranga Reddy District because of urbanisation.

The AP Land Reforms (Ceiling on Agricultural) Act, 1973

The most important step in the field of land reforms was to impose a ceiling on agricultural landholdings. The land ceiling act can be considered to be the culmination of land reforms in the state. Before this enactment, huge landholdings were in the hands of a few people, resulting in extraordinary concentration of wealth. This is detrimental to the common good of the poor people engaged in agriculture.

The act aims at ameliorating the conditions of the poor agriculturists and curbing the feudal tendencies of the landlords, by taking over the ceiling surplus land and distributing the same among the landless poor. The act gives effect to certain Directive Principles of State Policy and has been effective from 1-1-1975. For the purpose of this act, "ceiling area" in the case of a family unit, consisting of not more than five members, means an extent of land equal to one standard holding. In the case of a family unit consisting of more than five members, landholding equal to one standard holding plus one-fifth of the standard holding for every additional member, not exceeding two standard holdings can be retained. The standard holdings, in the case of a family unit consisting of not more than five members ranges from 10 to 27 acres in respect of wet lands and from 35 to 54 acres in respect of dry lands. Every person whose holding on the notified date exceeds the above limits, shall, within 30 days from the notified date,

furnish a declaration to the Tribunal, i.e., the RDO. The Tribunal has to conduct an enquiry and pass orders, determining whether the person (declarant) holds land in excess of the ceiling area and if so, and the amount of excess area. The person holding land in excess of the ceiling limit is liable to surrender the excess land held, and the Tribunal has to approve the surrender.

Table 7 shows the assignment of ceiling surplus lands redistributed in AP. We observe that about 2,32,221 acres of land was distributed among 1,88,086 SCs and about 1,19,992 acres among 74,322 STs from 1.11.1975 to 2005. The highest ceiling surplus land was distributed in Nellore District—about 26,809 acres of land was distributed among 23,424 SCs and 12,289 acres of land was distributed among 10,470 STs. However, about 24,089 acres of land was distributed among 8885 STs in Khammam District, which was the highest extent of land distributed among the STs.

The ceiling surplus land surrendered and vested in the government is to be allotted as house sites for agricultural labourers, etc., or transferred to weaker sections for agricultural purposes (at least half of the total extent among the SCs and STs and not less than two-thirds of the remaining extent of ceiling surplus land among the BCs). The maximum extent of ceiling surplus land to be allotted for agricultural purposes is 2.5 acres of wet or 5 acres of dry land; and five cents of land for house sites. Under this Act, about 5,85,670 acres of ceiling surplus land has been allotted to 4,58,271 beneficiaries.

The provisions of this Act were observed to be more in breach, subverting the same by way of filling wrongful declarations, suppressing the landholdings, and through benami transactions. In some cases, the lands which were not fit for cultivation were also surrendered, which involves fraud and collusion. It is necessary that all such cases are reviewed and reopened. However, there is no such provision in the Act, and could be a useful consideration. Apart from the above, there is a provision in the Act that requires every person presenting a document of alienation of land before the Registering Officer to furnish a declaration to the effect that the holding of the transferor does not exceed the ceiling area. The Registering Officer, soon after registering the document, is required to send a copy of the declaration to the concerned RDO. The RDO has to verify the veracity of the declaration and in case it is found that the transaction is in contravention of the Act, it shall become null and void. By and large, such cases are not being verified.

As per APLR (August, 2004), the total number of declarations filed regarding surplus land were 4,46,826, while the disposed of declarations were 4,45,194. The extent of declared surplus was 7,89,910.14 acres and about 6,46,521.30 acres of land was taken into possession from the declarants, while about 5,82,235.09 acres of land was distributed among individuals. It is observed that the Government of Andhra Pradesh is in favour of land ceiling in order to protect the interests of the SCs and the STs.

Conclusions

Distribution of land continues to be a major issue in our country, especially the rural areas, where a large section of the population subsists on agriculture or agriculture-related activities. It is rather ironic that despite successive rulers (including the British) being seized of the problem, uneven distribution of land continues to be a major area of concern. The framers of our Constitution did speak about ensuring equitable justice to all citizens and there has been a spate of legislations aimed at bringing about comprehensive land reforms. Conscious efforts were made to distribute surplus land to the landless, especially those belonging to the hitherto deprived sections of society. However, the land ownership pattern continues to be rather skewed in favour of the powerful sections of society. Even in cases where the Dalits are, on paper, the owners of the land in question, there is every possibility that the actual benefits are being reaped by someone else. There have also

been instances of uncultivable or barren land being handed over to the beneficiaries. The situation is no different in the erstwhile State of Andhra Pradesh, which had always prided itself on being termed as the 'rice bowl' of India. True, there have been a number of legislations and statistics to highlight the extent of land made available to the legitimate 'claimants', but have these successfully addressed the issue of equitable distribution of land? Have there not been sufficient loopholes to enable vested interests to circumvent the provisions with impunity? The law makers, especially in the two new States

need to address these issues on priority. They need to remember that merely passing legislations is not enough. They have to ensure that these are implemented in all earnestness on the ground as well.

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Table 1: Operational holdings and operated area by different Social groups in Andhra Pradesh

(Nos. in lakhs. Area in lakh Hect)

Social group	1976-77		1980-81		1986-87		1990-91		1995-96		2000-01		2005-06	
	No.s	Area	No.s	Area	No.s	Area	No.s	Area	No.s	Area	No.s	Area	No.s	Area
Marginal	28.69 (46.6)	13.36 (9.3)	38.04 (51.6)	18.86 (13.1)	44.6 (54.1)	20.54 (14.5)	52.6 (56.1)	23.69 (16.4)	63.0 (59.4)	29.04 (20.04)	70.2 (60.9)	31.0 (21.6)	78.14 (61.58)	32.87 (22.68)
Small	22.52 (20.3)	18.36 (12.8)	15.91 (21.6)	24.12 (16.8)	17.14 (20.8)	24.54 (17.3)	19.72 (21.2)	28.26 (19.5)	22.62 (21.3)	32.29 (22.5)	25.2 (21.8)	35.6 (24.7)	26.39 (21.91)	37.30 (25.74)
Semi-medium	10.72 (17.4)	29.93 (20.8)	11.74 (16.0)	32.61 (22.7)	12.54 (15.2)	33.91 (23.9)	13.45 (14.5)	36.4 (25.2)	13.95 (13.1)	37.36 (26.0)	14.2 (12.3)	37.9 (26.4)	14.44 (4.04)	38.35 (26.46)
Medium	7.53 (12.2)	46.47 (32.3)	6.46 (8.8)	39.79 (27.8)	6.57 (7.98)	38.65 (27.2)	6.44 (6.93)	37.77 (26.1)	5.63 (5.3)	32.31 (22.5)	5.0 (4.4)	28.5 (19.9)	4.87 (4.04)	27.59 (19.04)
Large	2.09 (3.4)	35.68 (24.8)	1.55 (2.10)	27.95 (19.5)	1.46 (1.77)	23.94 (16.9)	1.18 (1.27)	18.48 (12.8)	0.83 (0.8)	12.73 (8.85)	0.7 (0.6)	10.8 (7.5)	0.56 (0.5)	8.78 (6.05)
All	61.55 (100)	143.8 (100)	73.7 (100)	143.33 (100)	82.3 (100)	141.5 (100)	92.9 (100)	144.6 (100)	106.3 (100)	143.7 (100)	115.3 (100)	143.9 (100)	120.4 (100)	144.8 (100)

Source: Report on Agricultural Census of Andhra Pradesh, 2001, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Govt of AP. A note figure in parenthesis indicates percentage.

Table 2: Percentage distribution and operated area of land of the different social groups

Category	1976-77		1980-81		1986-87		1990-91		1995-96		2000-01		2005-06	
	No.s	Area	No.s	Area	No.s	Area	No.s	Area	No.s	Area	No.s	Area	No.s	Area
SC	13.4	6.9	12.6	6.9	12.2	6.8	12.73	7.48	12.12	7.42	11.85	7.86	11.80	7.84
ST	6.3	6.2	6.4	6.3	6.4	6.7	6.88	7.23	7.11	7.56	7.47	8.23	7.69	8.36
Others	80.3	86.9	81.0	86.8	81.4	86.5	80.39	85.29	80.77	85.02	80.66	83.91	80.49	83.80
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Report on Agricultural Census of Andhra Pradesh, 1980-81 to 2000-2001, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Govt of AP.

Table 3: Percentage distribution of operational holdings and area operated by Scheduled Castes in Andhra Pradesh

Social group	1976-77		1980-81		1986-87		1990-91		1995-96		2001-01		2005-06	
	No.s	Area	No.s	Area	No.s	Area	No.s	Area	No.s	Area	No.s	Area	No.s	Area
Marginal	64.8	22.3	67.7	27.6	70.1	30.4	70.67	31.98	73.46	37.15	75.88	36.45	74.59	38.32
Small	19.0	23.1	18.9	26.2	18.0	26.4	18.43	28.28	17.75	29.74	17.63	29.56	17.42	30.21
Semi-medium	11.5	26.0	10.2	25.2	9.1	24.5	8.70	24.40	7.39	22.51	6.95	21.27	6.63	20.90
Medium	4.1	21.5	2.9	15.2	2.5	14.6	2.03	12.38	1.32	8.82	1.39	9.36	1.27	8.64
Large	0.6	7.1	0.3	5.5	0.3	4.1	0.17	2.96	0.08	1.78	0.15	3.36	0.09	1.93
All groups	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Report on SC/ST Land Holdings, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Govt of AP.

Table 4: Average size of the holdings operated by Scheduled Castes (In hectares)

Size groups	1976-77	1980-81	1986-87	1990-91	1995-96	2000-01	2005-06
Marginal	0.41	0.43	0.41	0.41	0.42	0.41	0.48
Small	1.45	1.46	1.40	1.40	1.39	1.39	1.41
Semi-medium	2.69	2.62	2.56	2.56	2.53	2.54	2.63
Medium	2.21	5.66	5.59	5.58	5.53	5.56	5.51
Large	14.65	16.48	14.41	16.00	19.00	19.00	14.33
All groups	1.19	1.06	0.95	0.91	0.83	0.83	1.31

Source: Report on SC/ ST Land Holdings, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Govt of AP.

Table 5: Average size of the holdings operated by Scheduled Tribes (in hectares)

Size groups	1976-77	1980-81	1986-87	1990-91	1995-96	2000-01	2005-06
Marginal	0.52	0.51	0.49	0.49	0.50	0.48	0.48
Small	1.47	1.42	1.44	1.43	1.41	1.41	1.41
Semi-medium	2.62	2.65	2.62	2.66	2.63	2.64	2.63
Medium	5.82	5.77	5.70	5.65	5.53	5.55	5.51
Large	15.62	14.49	14.47	13.72	15.67	15.07	4.33
All groups	2.33	1.91	1.80	1.64	1.44	1.37	1.31

Source: Report on SC/ ST Land Holdings, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Govt of AP.

Table 6: Assignment of Government Lands in AP since the Beginning of the Scheme, i.e., from 1.11.1969, to 25.01.2005 (Extent of Land in Acres)

Name of the District	SCs		STs		BCs		Others		TOTAL	
	No.	Extent	No.	Extent	No.	Extent	No.	Extent	No.	Extent
Srikakulam	19325	15689.47	25324	21159.34	19158	15279.06	25297	20791.95	89104	72919.82
Vizianagaram	19412	22978.45	24757	30515.67	19086	22076.29	24601	30127.68	87853	105698.09
Visakhapatnam	24323	34653.76	34838	55183.01	24319	33958.21	33253	47561.08	116733	171356.06
East-Godavari	15450	12431.01	20686	20301.43	13805	11235.02	20379	16608.17	70320	60575.63
West-Godavari	15662	19886.79	18764	24857.27	13357	17241.58	19944	26738.82	67727	88724.46
Krishna	19489	19912.87	23720	24439.97	18206	19189.13	25728	27276.8	87143	90818.77
Guntur	21228	21236.68	26405	20400.2	19011	14877.45	28572	22292.90	95216	7807.23
Kurnool	17460	25857.59	21247	31498	16461	24966.44	22856	33859.97	78024	116182
Nellore	64745	100337.72	74291	117921.75	57595	89756.18	78907	12635.08	275538	434750.73
Cuddapah	29322	53215.5	34355	63017.83	26778	49131.8	39298	72575.26	129753	237940.39
Prakasham	46055	71292.81	55930	87136.31	41321	64778.45	60967	40730.52	204273	263938.09
Chittoor	63244	86642.64	79014	109261.09	57128	78670.91	84790	117026.69	284182	391601.33
Anantapur	53870	137311.61	67187	171846.88	50826	129325.09	72703	185741.51	244586	624225.09
Adilabad	19763	48877.4	27147	69515.06	18201	45223.78	25674	65115.43	90782	228731.64
Karimnagar	35036	25681.07	40989	30264.85	30919	22973.79	43651	32280.19	150595	111199.9
Nizamabad	33195	37488.65	41671	49006.16	30854	35196.95	44000	49575.14	149720	171266.9
Khamamm	28791	59223.28	41794	79377.57	25379	53585.7	38124	79949.72	134088	272136.27
Warangal	39155	39212.27	49278	49368.25	35995	35935.51	52173	52296.68	176601	176812.71
Mahabubnagar	29529	48206.07	35889	59630.66	27611	45120.01	38124	63361.07	131153	216317.81
Ranga Reddy	16530	15947.46	20701	19758.12	15205	14727.78	22122	21052.7	74558	71486.036
Nalgonda	38962	37896.33	44291	44484.18	34497	34010.37	45539	45397.14	163289	161788.02
Medak	36472	54494.53	44697	67895.47	34023	50460.81	48584	73564.51	163776	246415.32
Total	687018	988473.96	852972	1246839.07	629735	907720.31	895286	1250659.01	3065014	4393672.35

Source: Progress Report of Chief Commissioner Land Administration AP, Hyderabad

Table 7: Assignment of Ceiling Surplus Lands in AP State from 1.11.1975 to 2005 (Extent in Acres)

Name of the District	SC Beneficiaries	Extent	ST Beneficiaries	Extent	BC/Other Beneficiaries	Extent	Total No. of Beneficiaries	Total Extent Distributed Land (in acres)
Adilabad	6456	12477.75	7237	20590.90	7202	15429.04	20895	48497.69
Anantapur	12044	25360.06	1660	4060	12831	27400.81	26535	56820.87
Chittoor	4209	4266.44	1132	1192.60	3218	2808.4	8559	8267.44
Cudappah	3521	3277.16	635	495.79	1717	1547.34	5873	5320.29
East Godavari	9604	5168.75	2066	3307.23	10178	5709.39	21848	14185.37
Guntur	6497	3321.82	2790	1708.80	3946	2177.92	13233	7208.54
Karimnagar	16002	12058.21	2188	3371.91	14789	14939.29	32979	30369.41
Khammam	3134	2045.61	8885	24089.13	3065	3350.78	15084	29485.52
Krishna	16138	6435.57	7507	2443.94	8597	3967.06	32236	12846.57
Kurnool	19351	33482.32	1115	1784.63	17672	25674.99	38138	60941.94
Mahabubnagar	9762	17860.89	2325	5649.33	11332	20794.54	23419	44304.76
Medak	1364	19264.05	2125	3609.76	15850	20944.64	19339	43818.45
Nalgonda	10735	12800.02	3434	4549.12	13511	16005.21	27680	33354.35
Nellore	23424	26809.19	10470	12289.72	14299	16848.52	48193	55947.43
Nizamabad	4791	5472.21	1005	1278.20	4961	6138.78	10757	12889.19
Prakasham	7976	7917.86	2577	2040.52	8068	5908.9	18621	15867.28
Ranga Reddy	7198	12326.14	2478	5429.94	10763	15765.92	20439	33522.00
Srikakulam	5688	3365.49	2226	1736.12	6885	3077.91	14799	8179.52
Visakhapatnam	2796	3790.63	2121	3783.16	3749	2981.55	8666	10555.34
Vizianagaram	2391	2028.3	1534	1814.32	3459	2575.69	7384	6418.31
Warangal	9190	8391.65	8170	13987.32	15250	16374.18	32610	38753.15
West Godavari	5815	4301.13	642	780.03	4527	3035.74	10984	8116.90
Total	188086	232221.25	74322	119992.47	195863.00	233456.60	458271.00	585670.32

Source: Progress Report of Chief Commissioner Land Administration, AP, Hyderabad.

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