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REAL LAND REFORMS

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New National Wealth: The present urgent need of the country is immediate production of new wealth from whichever quarter or sector it may come from. When ample wealth is produced by way of food-grains, cash crops, goods and materials we can progress from poverty to prosperity. Rapid production of wealth can come out of agriculture alone and India is predominantly an agricultural country. In order to produce more food-grains at cheaper cost modernisation of agriculture is necessary reducing the land burden to the minimum.

India is a thickly populated country and its population is growing @ 2% every year. It is the second largest populated country in the world. By 1985 India should be able to produce 160 million tonnes of food-grains to feed the population of about 700 million. This increase in production can come through modernisation of agriculture through the retention of large holdings in tact and not by fragmentation as is contemplated now throughout India.

Increase National Wealth-Remove Poverty and Unemployment: To find a solution to the two great problems confronting the nation-poverty and unemployment a sound programme for modernisation of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Horticulture, Fisheries, Forestry, Piggery and Poultry is necessary. Without taxing the common man modernisation of all these items mentioned above can be carried out by the existing large farmers themselves and the Gross National Product can be raised to 60 thousand crores within 5 years. The small farmers also will try to copy the method adopted by the large farmers gradually.

Land Burden : In India the land burden is 75% and food grain production unit wise is the lowest in the world. We cannot be jubilant because we have attained self-sufficiency in food-grains. The so-called green revolution in India will vanish if monsoon fails as it did 4 years ago for two years successively. Fortunately we have had 4 good monsoons. Our irrigated area is only 18%. If monsoon fails 82% cultivated area will suffer very badly and we should once again import food.

In countries where the land burden is the lowest the agricultural production is the highest. There is tremendous shift from agriculture to other avocations leaving barely 6 percent land burden in USA, 7 in Sweden, 6 in Norway, 9 in Denmark and 15 in Japan. India has the highest pressure on land which is about 75% and there is no sign of its being lowered in the near future. Politicians quote Japan to substantiate their theory of small holdings. But they do not know the real fact. When the land pressure in Japan was high like that of India, Japan was not self-sufficient in food. Japan was importing food. So they started diversification at a rapid pace and within a period of 10 years they brought down the pressure to the present level of 15%. The result is that Japan not only stopped import but started to export food-grains. Japan at present is insisting the farmers to keep a portion of their farms in soil bank (keeping the lands fallow) for which the Government pays Rs. 8000/- per hectare.

Mechanised Farming : For mechanised farming we require economic holdings. Since a long time fragmentation of holdings has taken place through a natural process, when land is divided between sons, when the father dies. Fragmentation of lands is a curse in India and the Governments introducing low ceiling limits from time to time is a much worse

curse. When Land Reforms Acts were first introduced with a ceiling on holdings, the progressive farmers, with the extent of holdings left with them and with an assurance given by the late Prime Minister Nehru, that no more legislations will be brought to lower the ceiling limit, started investing heavily on sinking irrigation wells installing power pump sets and for purchasing tractors and were able to produce more grains adopting modern methods. India became self-sufficient and was able to stop importing food from abroad. The small farmers with their large families just consume all what little they grow leaving practically nothing for the market. It is the large farmers with their marketable surplus supply food grains to the urban population.

Unsound Policy: Is it a wise policy to snatch away the lands by introducing a low ceiling limit 10 acres, from the progressive farmers who have invested heavy sums for rapid improvement of lands? Why should we punish the progressive farmers who produce more at a cheaper price to the urban labour? The progressive farmers are never a burden on common tax payers.

Wealth from Waste: There are 80 million acres of cultivable waste in India which could be brought under plough and considerable amount of wealth can be procured by way of procuring food and cash crops. A sound scheme could be drawn up, for rapid development of these waste lands, wherein the landless agricultural labour could be re-habilitated, instead of taking away well managed farms from the progressive farmers.

We have imported thousands of tractors and are still importing thousands. The IV Plan target is that the country should possess 3,85,000 tractors.

If the ceiling limit is between 10 to 18 acres for a family, which will naturally reduce itself to 2-3 acres after a few years due to partition, what is the use of these thousands of tractors ?

24th 25th & 29th Constitution Amendments :

Taking shelter under these Constitution Amendments it is said, that the Government will not pay full market value for the surplus lands snatched away from the farmers above the ceiling limit. Is it fair to deny the market value to the progressive farmers who have raised the production level, who have been responsible to stop import of food-grains, with their experience, technical know-how, and investment of capital ? Can any one boldly invest capital on land hereafter ? Before the provisions of the land Reforms Acts passed earlier could be implemented, further legislation is contemplated to reduce the ceiling limit. Where is the guarantee that a fresh legislation to lower the limit further will not be brought again after a few years ? Then what will be the fate of the farmers ? Working class families in plantations or factories have a much better assured income all through the year than the small farmers.

The farmers in India had a status of their own since centuries past and even during British rule, they were considered as the back bone of the country. In course of time the farmers will be reduced to fifth rate citizenship and their status will be worse than class fourth officers [chapprais]

If monsoon fails the plight of the farmers is indescribable. They do not get free medical facilities, T. A. or D. A., pension, gratuity, housing facilities, bonus maternity benefit etc. etc. enjoyed by workers in factories and offices.

If the intention of the Government ultimately is not to introduce collectives in India, we do not know what we could actually achieve by these Ceiling Laws, which is most impracticable and difficult to implement even with enormous cost as is shown here.

Implementation of Land Reform Acts :

a) The soil texture in India will vary not only from state to state, but will vary from district to district, taluk to taluk and even village to village. The fixation of ceiling limit according to the texture of soil, terrain, climatic conditions and proximity to the market centre etc., requires a large band of expert officials to decide. A uniform fixation of ceiling limit country wise or even State wise will not be proper as there are great differences in all respects, as said above and individual cases will have to be considered.

b) We require an army of surveyors to survey the land and sub-divide the surplus land in each individual case at enormous cost giving ample scope for corruption. As it is, it takes more than a year for the surveyor to bifurcate the land after a sale deed is effected. Even after decades, survey work will not be solved.

c) Then the question of distribution of surplus lands comes. Here also considerable number of men will have to be appointed to decide to whom the land should go, whether to scheduled caste people or to very small land holders, or landless labourers or political sufferers. We cannot satisfy even a fraction of landless with lands as the surplus land available after introducing ceiling laws is a fraction only. In Punjab the surplus land was found not even one percent.

d) Then again after a great deal of calculation for the fixation of amounts [no market value or proper compensation will be paid] on a slab rate of 72%, 50% and 25% of the market value for the surplus lands above the ceiling we require an army of officials who will have to work for decades to finish the job, that too most haphazardly.

e) After surveying and fixation of the area of surplus lands in each case and till the time such surplus land is actually distributed among the unlimited landless labourers, who should cultivate such lands in the meanwhile has not been decided yet.

f) Why should the general public pay for the surplus lands which after all is not being used for the public purpose.

When the surplus land for distribution is so small, is it worth the time and energy spent for it, the worry and anxiety witnessed over it and the hundreds of crores of common man's money spent on these?

g) The provisions of the Act will have a retrospective effect. This is another confusion for which a considerable time, money and energy of several hundreds of people will have to be spent.

h) Hundreds of farmers will have taken heavy sums as loans on mortgage of their properties for improvement of lands and for modernisation. When surplus lands are taken away from such farmers who should be responsible to clear mortgage loans? What would be the quantum of such loans?

Urban Ceiling and probable Discrimination between Urban & Rural People :

There is a move to introduce ceiling on urban property, which is another impracticable suggestion and very difficult to implement. The proposal to fix a ceiling limit for urban area of Rs 2 lakhs will hit hard even on middle class people. The houses built in urban area a few years ago spending Rs. 50,000/- have appreciated now to more than 4 lakhs. The value of house sites have appreciated by ten times since a few years. Even then there is no comparison between Rs. 2 lakhs on urban ceiling and the value of 10 acres ceiling in rural area. Therefore discrimination question arises between these two sectors. Low ceiling on rural property, urban ceiling, ceiling on incomes etc. are all retrograde step. The one-man-one-profession theory is another retrograde step and it is against the spirit of the Indian Constitution.

Need for Incentive for More Production :

When the Governments have resorted to tax the entrepreneurs at the highest level in the world, is it a wise policy to come in the way of more and more production and construction by talented and experienced people with their own capital? Are we not taxing men's brain and thinking power? The road from poverty to prosperity can be built only by progressive entrepreneurs without taxing the common man. There is no limit to what a man can do in his own walk of life, if he is allowed to work freely unfettered. All the nations in the world which have progressed well and nations which are progressing fast have given full scope for people to produce unlimited wealth by giving all encouragement and incentives for the benefit of the nation. The

poor will suffer, the unemployed will suffer and the entire nation will suffer if restricting bills are introduced without considering the future.

In an underdeveloped Country like India, it is not the ceiling on several items that are required, but on the otherhand, we should declare the floor limit on all items and seriously work for them.

Laziness should not be encouraged under any circumstances. Japan has progressed due to hard work. We are sure that the Legislators & the Ministers will be realistic in their approach and consider the above points in the best spirits.

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