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## **Land Reforms**

### **Pre Independence**

- Under the **British Raj**, the farmers did not have the ownership of the lands they cultivated, the landlordship of the land lied with the Zamindars, Jagirdars etc.
- Several important issues confronted the government and stood as a challenge in front of independent India.
  - Land was concentrated in the hands of a few and there was a proliferation of intermediaries who had no vested interest in self-cultivation.
    - Leasing out land was a common practice.
  - The tenancy contracts were expropriative in nature and tenant exploitation was almost everywhere.
  - Land records were in extremely bad shape giving rise to a mass of litigation.

- One problem of agriculture was that the land was fragmented into very small parts for commercial farming.
  - It resulted in inefficient use of soil, capital, and labour in the form of boundary lands and boundary disputes.

### **Post Independence**

- A committee, under the Chairmanship of J. C. Kumarappa was appointed to look into the problem of land. The Kumarappa Committee's report recommended comprehensive agrarian reform measures.
- The Land Reforms of the independent India had four components:
  1. The Abolition of the Intermediaries
  2. Tenancy Reforms
  3. Fixing Ceilings on Landholdings
  4. Consolidation of Landholdings.
- These were taken in phases because of the need to establish a political will for their wider acceptance of these reforms.

#### Abolition of the Intermediaries

- **Abolition of the zamindari system:** The first important legislation was the abolition of the zamindari system, which removed the layer of intermediaries who stood between the cultivators and the state.
- The reform was relatively the most effective than the other reforms, for in most areas it succeeded in taking away the superior rights of the zamindars over the land and weakening their economic and political power.

- The reform was made to strengthen the actual landholders, the cultivators.
- **Advantages:** The abolition of intermediaries made almost 2 crore tenants the owners of the land they cultivated.
  - The abolition of intermediaries has led to the end of a parasite class. More lands have been brought to government possession for distribution to landless farmers.
  - A considerable area of cultivable waste land and private forests belonging to the intermediaries has been vested in the State.
  - The legal abolition brought the cultivators in direct contact with the government.
- **Disadvantages:** However, zamindari abolition did not wipe out landlordism or the tenancy or sharecropping systems, which continued in many areas. It only removed the top layer of landlords in the multi-layered agrarian structure.
  - It has led to large-scale eviction. Large-scale eviction, in turn, has given rise to several problems – social, economic, administrative and legal.
- **Issues:** While the states of J&K and West Bengal legalised the abolition, in other states, intermediaries were allowed to retain possession of lands under their personal cultivation without limit being set.
  - Besides, in some states, the law applied only to tenant interests like sairati mahals etc. and not to agricultural holdings.

- Therefore, many large intermediaries continued to exist even after the formal abolition of zamindari.
- It led to large-scale eviction which in turn gave rise to several socio-economic and administrative problems.