
UNIT 11 LAND REFORMS: SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL LIMITATIONS

Contents

- 11.0 Objectives
- 11.1 Introduction
- 11.2 Rural Social Structure
- 11.3 Agrarian Economy and Rural Economic Inequality
- 11.4 Traditional Power Structure and Political Apathy
- 11.5 Nature of Rural Power Structure in India
- 11.6 Evaluation of Land Reforms
- 11.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 11.8 Key Words
- 11.9 Suggested Readings

11.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit aims to acquaint you with socio-economic and political factors which have proved to be the main hurdle, in the implementation of land reform measures. After going through this unit, you will be able to identify:

- the elements of rural socio-economic structure;
- the nature of power structure; and
- the way these socio-economic and political factors have emerged as hurdle, in the process of land reforms.

11.1 INTRODUCTION

Land is the basic source of sustenance in the rural areas, as all primary and auxiliary activities directly or indirectly are related to land. Since its concentration in limited hands have been the main forces resulting in social, economic, and even political inequalities, land reforms have been the major thrust area in policy making for rural India.

Land reforms is visualized as an instrument of social justice and is directed to do away with the exploitative relationship characterized by sharp class division between rich landowners and impoverished peasants with no security of tenure. Thus, it is focused against the absentee landlords, through impositions of ceiling on size of holdings. It also implies redistribution of surplus land among the peasants.

Regarding rural economy, land reforms are conceived as a means of increasing agricultural production through land development. Peasants develop a long-term interest for investing in the land they own. Simultaneously, the small farmers are benefited with the massive input provided by the state to the farmers. Apart from this, land reforms will enable a more equitable distribution

of land which will also generate income on a more equitable basis. The generation of such income will facilitate the growth of purchasing power among the lowest sections of society who remain landless.

In a country like India where more than 74% of the population live in rural areas, the pattern of landholding happens to be a major co-relate of political power structure, social hierarchy, and economic relations. Possession of land confers attributes of political privilege and social prestige. The pattern of land ownership further determines the way land and labour are combined for production purposes having direct implications on the distribution of the produce. Thus, the importance of land reforms becomes central to the agrarian structure.

11.2 RURAL SOCIAL STRUCTURE

The Concept: Any measure to bring about structural changes in society is always brought with various kinds of constraints which are more prominent in rural India. In order to know the social, economic and political limitations of land reforms, it is necessary to analyze rural social structure. Herbert Spencer being the first, and then Emile Durkheim, made efforts to define social structure. Later some sociologists and social anthropologists gave more systematic definitions. Talcott Parsons defines social structure as the arrangement of the interrelated institutions, agencies, and social patterns, as well as the status and role which each person assumes in the group. According to Radcliffe Brown, the components of social structures are human beings, the structure itself being an arrangement of persons in relationship institutionally defined and regulated. R. M. Mac Iver opines, “The various modes of the grouping together comprise the complex pattern of social structure. In the analysis of the social structure the role of diver attitudes and interests of social beings is revealed.”

The best way to understand the concept of social structure is by taking the example of organic structure, though the part of organic structure is the same in every case, yet the forms of the structure of the people differ. Similarly, the parts of all the social structure are similar, e.g., every social structure has a family, religion, political organization, economic institutions, land, area, etc. Yet the forms of social structure differ, for example, the form of family is not similar in all the social structures. In sum, we can say that social structure is a patternised arrangements of human relationship structures and these structures are:

- Ecological entities,
- Human groups,
- Institutional agencies,
- Organisation; and
- Collectivities.

Without undermining the importance of various constitutive parts of the social structure, in the context of land reforms, we may consider the following three most important institutions of rural social structure:

- Village Community,
- Family, and

- Caste

i) Village Community

The concept of community, as used in sociology, has been defined in different ways. These definitions have laid emphasis on either constellation of institutions, or deep sense of togetherness, or territorial base, as important features of a community. According to R. M. Mac Iver and C. H. Page, “Wherever the members of any group, small or large, live together in such a way that they share, not this or that particular interest but the basic conditions of a common life, we call that group a community. The work of a community is that one’s life may be lived wholly within it. One cannot live wholly within a business organization or a church. One can live wholly within a tribe or a city. The basic criterion of community, then, is that all one’s social relationships may be found within it”.

Features of Indian Village Community

Indian villages do not represent uniform unit based on land area and size of population, settlement pattern, land ownership, type of farming, occupational pattern, structure of authority and power, caste composition, distance from cities etc. There are considerable differences among them from these points of views. However, territorial base is an important characteristics of Indian village community. In addition, village is also a unit of social and economic organization. Even though people belong to different castes, classes, and religions, with regards to identity they have a strong sense of unity. It reinforces the sense of belongingness or “we-feeling”. There is no anonymity in the village and a sense of village solidarity exists. The village is perhaps the oldest permanent community in India.

India a Land of Villages

India is a land of villages and continue to dominate the Indian way of life. Although villages constitute one of the basic elements of our social structures, it is the village which has sheltered the two other elements of social structure viz., joint family system and caste. An overwhelming majority of India’s population live in more than 5.58 lakh villages. According 1991 Census, the village population of India is almost 74.28%. But the size of the villages has always varied. If we look at the population size, we find that 26.5 per cent villages have less than 500 population. Another 48.8% villages have population between 500-2000 and 19.4% villages have 2000-5000 population. Thus, mediumsize villages constitute almost half of the villages.

Indian Villages: Historical Context

Indian villages have a prolonged history of their own. They have not only existed through the ages, but they have also played a prominent role in Indian polity. We have references of villages as ‘grama’ in ancient sources as the RIG VEDA, the RAMAYANA and the MAHABHARAT, which also mention ‘gramani’ as the head of the village. We also have enough literature to speak of the position of villages during 5th and 6th century B.C, the period in which Jainism and Buddhism emerged. ‘Arthashastra’ of Kautilya provides us specific details about the village and its administration during the Maurya period. After the decline of the Mauryas, even during the Gupta and post-Gupta period, the villager and the village councils continued to enjoy importance as local

administrative units. During the Mughal period, villages remained as political units having network of relations with other political units such as the town, the city, the Pargana and the province. It is the British rule during which the village community lost its autonomy, and its administration became centralized, which had never been experienced in the past.

Decline in the Importance of Villages

Villages started declining during the British period. Several factors contributed to the eclipse of the village administration. The British administration never provided any grant to the village fund from the village revenue for the developmental activities. The establishment of centralized and uniform legal system put an end to the power and authority of the village institutions. The process of urbanization made cities more attractive than the villages. The British introduced the “Zamindari” system in many areas, though it wanted to establish a new system of revenue collection and land settlement. Although Panchayat Acts were passed in some states to revive the village Panchayat; but nothing concrete was done to revive the institutional system.

Current Status

After Independence there have been attempts to formalize the structure, organization and functioning of village panchayats on democratic lines, through Panchayati Raj legislations in different states, so that people’s participation in the development programmes could be ensured. Today, Panchayats have a statutory base with a wide range of regulatory as well as developmental functions, rather than being confined to customs and traditions. In some states, the Panchayats are also endowed with financial powers. In most states, Gram Panchayats are now a part of the three tier Panchayati Raj structure at the district, the block, and the village levels. The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments invest greater role and power to the Panchayati Raj institutions.

ii) Family

The family is a primarily, permanent and the most pervasive of all social institutions. This is the basic unit of the social structure of any society. All societies both large and small, primitive, and civilized, ancient, and modern have institutionalized the process of procreation of the species and the rearing of the young. However, there could be differences in terms of types of marriage, composition, size, structure and nature of authority, role, patterns of descent, nature of ownership of property etc. Since land is the primary source of property and family owns land, any measure related to land reform cannot ignore the institution/association of family.

Features of Family

Although many features of the family have been elaborated in sociological literature, following are the essential characteristics of the family:

Social Features

- a) Conjugal relationship between parents as per the form of marriage,
- b) Common residence,
- c) Basic economic unit,
- d) Emotional bond among the members to meet psycho-social needs; and

- e) Socialization and informal social control of members.

Economic Features

- a) Regulating labour requirement,
- b) Defining the role and function of each member of each family as per the existing division of labour, and
- c) Accumulating and distributing the material goods produced.

Functions of Family

The family owes its existence as a social institution to several functions that it performs both for the society as well as for the individual. From one point of view, the functions are interdependent and a logical division into separate categories may not do justice to their full elaboration. From another angle they are independent of one another and in case of necessity, they may be performed by some other social institutions. There is no other institution that can perform all the functions of a family so well and satisfy the needs of society so effectively.

Functions of the Family	
For Society	For Individual
Continuation of the species	Life and survival
Sexual control	Sexual opportunity
Maintenance	Protection and support
Cultural transmission	Socialization
Status ascription	Societal identification

Forms of Family

We find various classifications of family in sociological literature. Based on authority, a family may be patriarchal or matriarchal. Under the patriarchal family, the male head of the family is possessed of inclusive powers. He is the owner and administrator of the family property and its rights. Patriarchal family is patrilineal, wherein the line of descent is traced through male, and patrilocal, where the wife after marriage comes to live in the home of the husband. In the case of matriarchal family, all the privileges and prerogatives lie with the main female member. It is, in this sense, almost reverse of the patriarchal system. Based on blood relationship, a family may be conjugal i.e., established through marriage, or consanguine i.e., consisting of blood relations. Similarly, because of structure, the family has been classified into nuclear and extended family. A nuclear family is one which consists of the husband, wife, and their children, whereas an extended family can be viewed as a merger of several nuclear family.

In Indian villages, joint family are move prevalent. It consists of members related through blood and are spread over three or more generations, who live together under common roof, with a common family head. There could be variations in degree but some of the common characteristics of a joint family are common roof, common kitchen, common worship, common property, Karta's

authority, mutual rights, responsibilities and obligations, and some degree of self-sufficiency.

Current Status

The Indian joint family has undergone significant changes during the recent times. Sociologists like I. P. Desai, K. M. Kapadia, Aileen Ross, A. M. Shah, M. S. Gore and Ram Krishna Mukharjee have examined the causes and consequences of changes in the family. Some of these changes are structural in nature while others are functional. Regarding the structural changes, we find changes in respect of the size of joint family, ownership of the property because of Hindu Inheritance and Succession Act of 1956, exercise of authority, conjugal relationship, and joint family taking the form of dependent nuclear family. Joint family has undergone many changes with respect to its functional aspect as well. Today, a joint family is not fulfilling many of its functions for there are well established and specialized agencies to undertake these functions. External agencies, such as schools, colleges, hostels, hotels, cinema houses, hospitals, HelpAge homes, and voluntary associations have taken over some of the traditional activities of the joint families.

The importance of the joint family as a self-contained economic unit based on land is getting transformed. Rise in population causing pressure on land and other socio- economic forces; like education, individualism, separate sources of income, and social mobility, are also affecting the structure of joint family. Introduction of land reforms and ceiling on land give rise to the fear that the institution of joint family would be disadvantageous in working out the entitlement under ceiling.

iii) Caste

Caste system is an important structural aspect of the Indian social stratification system, which influences the exercise of authority and power, and control of instruments of material production. This is the main distributive management of a society. In addition, there are strong socio-cultural factors which operate as indicators of social stratification e.g., political power, occupational prestige, level of educational attainment, local community status, ritual position, etc.

Features of India Caste System

Caste system with all its peculiar features is to be found only in India. The caste system, the joint family system and the village community are generally regarded as a three basic pillars of the India social system. Although large numbers of features have been delineated, we can identify following salient features:

- 1) **Ascriptive status:** In the caste system birth is the criterion of status and status is ascribed to the individuals by birth.
- 2) **A closed system:** Since social mobility is restricted, individuals cannot change their caste easily and movement in the social hierarchy is difficult.
- 3) **Purity and impurity:** Hierarchical order is based on the principle of purity and impurity. This gives rise to the evil system of untouchables.
- 4) **Restrictions on social relations:** It regulates even routine activities of the members. These restrictions are related to social cohabitation and dining with other caste members.

- 5) **Complexity:** The existence of more than 800 castes and sub-castes make the system very complex. It is not easy to place caste one after the other in a hierarchical order.
- 6) **Endogamy:** Caste is an endogamous group. Marriages within the caste is mandatory and as per the rule of the caste system, inter-caste marriage is not allowed.
- 7) **Caste consciousness:** One caste member form in group. This gives rise to caste consciousness which goes against the principle of egalitarian society and often gives rise to hostility which often affects various economic measures to bring about directed changes.

Functions of Caste

The existence and continuance of caste system reveals that it has been fulfilling certain functions. J. H. Hutton has grouped these functions into the following three categories.

- 1) **Individual based functions:** It provides ascriptive status to the individuals by birth, keeping in view the position of a caste in the hierarchical order. The choices of the individuals with regards to marriage, selection of friends, food habits etc. are dictated by caste. It provides for occupational choices of the individuals. In time of crisis caste also guarantees social security to the individuals.
- 2) **Community/Group based functions:** It determines the membership of the community and assigns social status to the individuals. However, the exact position of a caste may not be same in different region. It enables members to maintain unity by being members of a cohesive group. It also helps in transmitting culture from one generation to the other.
- 3) **Society based functions:** Caste being the basis of the Hindu social organization, it has certain functions in relation to society at large. Individual members of the society always try to identify themselves with one or the other caste. Thus, it has provided opportunities for caste solidarity and mutual support. Different tasks or works of the society are assigned to different castes. In addition, one of the major functions of the caste is that it combines various groups, institutions, and sub-systems into a coherent social entity.

Dominant Castes

Traditionally, there existed cooperation among various caste and economic necessities added to their interdependence. Jajamani system played a crucial role in unifying the different castes. But the decline of the Jajamani system has disturbed interdependence of castes. Conflicting situations are witnessed wherever and whenever one caste attempts to dominate the other. Castes are not equal anywhere, rather we find the domination of one caste over the rest of the castes. This domination is in the form of powerful influence on other castes. According to M.N. Srinivas, who introduced the concept of dominant caste, “a caste is dominant when it preponderates numerically over the other castes, when it also wields preponderant economic and political power and when it enjoys a high ritual status in the local caste hierarchy”. Srinivas further writes, “New factors affecting dominance have emerged in the last eighty years or so. Western education, jobs in the administration and urban sources of

income is all significant in contributing to the prestige and power of particular caste groups”. Thus, we can identify determinants of dominance as:

- 1) Ownership of sizeable amount of agricultural land,
- 2) Numerical strengths,
- 3) High ritual status,
- 4) Greater economic and political power,
- 5) Higher educational level of the caste, and
- 6) Higher occupation (technical/professional) pursued by the caste.

However, in local situations, we may find variations in the elements of dominance. Certain families may be a few in numbers but having network with the dominant caste in region may be dominant in the village. Similarly, at the State level, we may find shift in the dominance of the caste groups, depending on economic and political changes. At the state level, Lingayats and Okkaligas in Karnataka, Reddys and Kammas in Andhra Pradesh, Nairs and Ezhavas in Kerala, Gounder Padayachi and Mudaliars in Tamilnadu, Marathas, Brahmins, and Mahars in Maharashtra, Rajputs and Yadavs in U.P., Jats in Haryana, Yadavs, Bhumihars and Koiris in Bihar, are found to be influencing the socio-economic and political life of the people.

Current Status

During the recent years the political influence of the dominant caste has increased. Democracy and universal adult franchise have provided them opportunity to become politically strong and powerful. Their representation in Assemblies and Parliament has increased. With the introduction of Panchayati Raj system, these castes have extended their area of influence in villages and districts. They have used the political instruments to obtain for their caste members, good education, and prestigious jobs. We shall examine the role of dominant castes in the context of land reforms later.

11.3 AGRARIAN ECONOMY AND RURAL ECONOMIC INEQUALITY

The word ‘agrarian’ pertains ‘to cultivate’ or ‘agricultural land and its tenure’, landed property and management, or distribution of land. Indian rural economy is primarily agrarian in nature. After almost five decades of planned economic development, India continues to have a predominantly rural economy. But unfortunately, Indian agrarian economy is still in backward shape. Indian agriculture depends upon the monsoon, with 74% of the area depending on rainfall as the chief source of irrigation. The distribution of this rainfall is uneven with respect to time as well as region. Harnessing water for irrigation would involve inter basin transfer of river water, which is economically prohibitive. Many of our agricultural problems are due not merely to the inadequacy of irrigation, but also because of the inefficient use of valuable water. What is true for water is often true for other agricultural inputs as well. Although fertilizers consumption has increased, manifolds, yet its use is very unevenly distributed both among crops and region.

Performance in Agriculture

The basic problems of the rural economy are related to the low levels of agricultural productivity. Productivity of land measured in terms of yields per hectare, continues to be low. However, there has been a substantial increase in yield of wheat, rice and sugarcane. One of the major problems in agricultural sector is that wherever production has increased, distribution and marketing system has been problematic. However, Government has since the mid-seventies, policy set a minimum floor price for agricultural products. Such prices have been periodically revised to provide remunerative prices to farmers.

Rural Economic Inequality

Inequality in rural economic structure has been very prominent and consists of the following agrarian classes. A.R. Desai has identified the following classes in rural areas.

- 1) Landowners (about 22%)
- 2) Tenants (about 27%),
- 3) Agricultural laborers (about 31%), and
- 4) Non-agriculturists (about 27%).

Daniel Thorner's categorization into Maliks, Kisan and Mazddors are based on the following criteria:

- 1) Who obtain income from the land, that is, through rent, one's own cultivation or wages.
- 2) Nature of rights, that is, ownership rights, tenancy rights, share-cropping rights, and no rights at all.
- 3) Doing no work at all, doing partial work, doing total work, and doing work for others to earn wages.

D.N. Dhanagre, disagreeing with Thorner's classification on ground of theoretical assumptions, has suggested an alternative model consisting of five classes:

- a) Landlords
- b) Rich peasants
- c) Middle peasants
- d) Poor peasants
- e) Landless labourers

Although classifications of agrarian classes are not final because of the variations and complexities, yet it can help us as a methodological tool to examine rural economic inequality.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: a) Use the space given below for your answer.

b) Compare your answers with the text.

- 1) What are the causes of the poor performance of agriculture in India?

.....
.....

.....
.....
.....
.....

2) What are five agrarian classes enumerated by D.N. Dhanagare?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

11.4 TRADITIONAL POWER STRUCTURE AND POLITICAL APATHY

The Concept: The concept of power structure occupies central place in the analysis of Indian rural system. Political scientists, psychologists and sociologists have analyzed the concept in different ways. Plato and Aristotle explain power structure in relation to their theory of state, whereas sociologists find the notion of power as an integral part of social structure. Max Weber regarded power as the fundamental concept in stratification of which class, status and party were the three separate dimensions. According to Weber, classes were the outcome of the distribution of the economic power, status was a kind of normatively defined social power and parties were groups active in the political sphere. Power was, then, defined by Weber, in general terms, as the probability of person or group carrying out their will even when opposed by others. Many sociologists since Weber have assumed that power involves subordinate resistance which must be overcome by subordinates. Alvin Gouldner noted, “power is, among other things, the ability to enforce one’s moral claims. The powerful can thus conventionalize their moral defaults”. David Lockwood, while recognizing power a latent force, observed that power must only refer to the capacity to realize one’s ends in conflicts situations against the will of others, and it must also include the capacity to prevent opposition arising in the first place. We often here that the study of power concentrates on the making and taking of important decisions. Thus, the concept of power is complex. Various facets of power manifest in the given socio-cultural set-up.

11.5 NATURE OF RURAL POWER STRUCTURE IN INDIA

Before the abolition of feudalism, rural power structure was greatly influenced by the Zamindari and the Jagirdari systems. Primarily it represented economic interests and manifested through the institutions of caste and Panchayats. Agriculture being the primary occupation, ownership of land and monopoly on economic activities influenced and controlled rural power structure. Thus, even in the selection of rural leaders either in the village panchayat and caste

panchayat, the zamindars had a virtual monopoly. Along with the zamindari system, caste system has also been a fundamental element of rural social structure. Both the systems gave rise to a unique power structure in rural India. Even village panchayats were constituted mostly by representatives of caste panchayats. Thus, in pre-independence India the caste, the Zamindari and the Jagirdari systems, and the village panchayats monopolized rural power structure.

In the changed context and circumstances rural power structure has also undergone transformation. Abolition of Zamindari system paved the way for a more democratic system. Public land such as village ponds, grazing grounds, village streets etc. which was used by the Zamindar's as personal property, have been declared as community property. This disarmed the Zamindars of economic exploitation and dominance over others. K.L. Sharma writes, "today there is congruence in some aspects of elite culture, style of living and exercise of power, whereas in some other respects, certain amount of incongruence prevails. For instance, there is a greater possibility of political elites wielding economic power and that of less possibility of economic dominance exercising political dominance. The cultural elite may have more economic privileges than having access to positions of political power. However professional elites continue to be a dividing line between different types of elites though the nature of professionalization today is different from that of the traditional one."

Features of Modern Power Structure

- 1) Either directly or indirectly, upper castes have a dominant role in rural power structure.
- 2) Power has shifted from crude caste structure and has come to be in a more differentiated structures such as panchayats and political parties. The important role of caste, however, remains.
- 3) Due to the process of Sanskritization and democratization, lower castes have become more organized and the process of their empowerment to exert control over rural power structure is clearly visible.
- 4) Rural leadership of limited caste groups is being replaced by other caste groups. Caste remains an inseparable part of rural power structure.
- 5) Quite often informal leaders influence the decisions at the village levels. The most important feature of this kind of leadership is that they are men who can get things done, despite the contrary wishes of other less powerful people.

Political Apathy

Innumerable plans and policies since Independence have been formulated to bring about socio-economic changes in rural India. Yet things have not changed in the desired direction. One of the most important reasons behind this is political apathy. Broader objective of political parties has been to control power at the national and state levels. Every political party issue manifesto at the time of elections which contains major policies and plans of action. But once the election is over, the manifesto is forgotten. There is also a gap between the policy of the party at the state and national level and at local level. It has often been observed that ignorance, poverty, illiteracy and inegalitarian system has favoured the political intentions of the parties. It is comparatively easier to sway the ignorant voters on desired political line. Political response in concrete terms regarding major structural changes in rural India has not

been satisfactory and indifference among political workers at grassroots has prevailed. This is true in the context of land reform measures also. Regarding rural development, Amartya Sen has rightly pointed out that “.... the elimination of ignorance, illiteracy, remediable poverty, preventable diseases, and of needless inequality in opportunities must be seen as objectives that are valued for their own sake.”

11.6 EVALUATION OF LAND REFORMS

Land reform measures since Independence have brought about some change in rural India. Different state governments have undertaken various land reform measures such as abolition of the intermediaries, tenancy reforms, ceiling on landholdings, consolidation of landholdings, completion and updating of land records, cooperative farming, distribution of surplus government land etc. The efforts are in right direction. The problem, however, relates to the poor performance. The Annual Report of the Ministry of Rural Development for the year 2005-06 mentions that out of 39.16 lac acres of Bhoodan land donated, 21.75 lac acres have been distributed and 17.41 lac acres of land is yet to be distributed. The worst performance has been in the State of Bihar, including Jharkhand, where out of 21.18 lac acres only 7.23 lac acres, or one third, has been distributed. Let us first discuss the progress made so far and we will examine the causes for the poor performance of the land reform programme later.

Progress of Land Reforms in India

Land reform measures are the most important instrument to bring about fundamental changes in the agrarian economy of rural India, including the rural social structure. It is also a means of empowerment of those who have out of the development process. Keeping this in view the state governments have enacted suitable legislations to implement the land reforms. These efforts have had some positive effects of which are noted below:

- 1) Substantial number of tenants have become owners of land that they are cultivating.
- 2) The exploitative Zamindari and Mahalwari systems have been abolished.
- 3) Tenancy rights have become more secure.
- 4) The step in the direction of social justice has been in the form of ceiling limits to the landholdings which many of the states have fixed.
- 5) The system of absentee landlordism has been eradicated.
- 6) Rent payable by the farmers has been regularized.

In spite of the positive effects, the performance of land reforms programmes has not been entirely satisfactory.

Performance of Land Reform Programme

The unsatisfactory progress of land reforms is clear from the latest report of the NSSO, which shows that 10% of the rural population or 1.5 crore of the rural families are still landless. In the year 1961-62, available agricultural land was 12.87 crore hectares which has come down to 10.72 crore hectares in the year 2003, which shows a decline in the availability in the agricultural land.

The Survey also reports, an interesting fact that 44% of the total agricultural land is owned by Other Backward Castes, in comparison to 36% by the higher castes. Scheduled Castes own 9% of the total available agricultural land. It shows that the middle and backward castes are emerging as a force to reckon with in rural India and the Scheduled Castes are still deprived.

Some of the reasons for the poor performance of the land reforms programme are mentioned below:

- 1) **Absence of strong political will:** Political leadership is dominated by the upper caste/upper class people who have their own vested interest. This has resulted in the absence of strong political will, which is a prerequisite for successful implementation of land reform programme.
- 2) **Lack of pressure from below:** The beneficiaries of land reform programme i.e., tenants and landless agricultural labourers, are largely unorganized and they have not been able to bring about the required pressure on the government for speedy implementation of the programme.
- 3) **Legal difficulties:** Large number of cases related to land ceiling are still pending in the court of law. The rich take advantage of the legal loopholes.
- 4) **Absence of updated land records:** Evidence of the right on land can be proved through land records. Unfortunately, such records are not properly maintained. It has also been accepted in the Annual Report 2005-06 of the Rural Development Ministry that one of the constraints in improving of the implementation of land reforms is the absence of land records. However, a centrally sponsored scheme is strengthening of Revenue Administration and updating of Land Records (SRA & ULR) is now under implementation.
- 5) **Retention of land for personal cultivation:** The term 'personal cultivation' was not properly defined. Taking advantage of the ambiguity the intermediaries retained large chunks of land for personal cultivation.
- 6) Role of Central Government has been limited to given suggestions and directions to the state governments and there has not been enough pressure on the state government for speedy implementation.
- 7) **Absence of development-oriented administration:** The nature and culture of bureaucracy has been that of revenue collection and law enforcement. Overall complacency combined with inefficiency and corruption, also contributed to a great extent to the failure of the programme.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: a) Use the space given below for your answer.

b) Compare your answers with the text.

- 1) Mention the areas covered by Land Reforms Programme.

.....
.....
.....
.....

8) Mention three important positive impacts of the Land Reforms Programme.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

9) What are the important reason for poor performance of Land Reform Programme?

.....
.....
.....
.....

11.7 LET US SUM UP

In rural India all social, economic, and political activities are in one way or the other related to ownership of land. Therefore, any measure to bring about fundamental structured change will have to investigate the land system. Land reforms programme has been an effort in their direction. To evaluate the success and failure of the programme one must understand rural social structure and the nature of agrarian economy which has the seed of constraints inherent in it. It also helps us to understand the continuity between the past and the present. Regarding social structure, we have examined the three most important institutions viz. the village community, the family and the caste. We have also examined the inegalitarian Indian agrarian economy. These, two in unison, affected and influenced rural power structure. Political apathy from above and poor response from the beneficiaries below also affected the performance of the programme.

An objective assessment of the Land Reforms suggests that it would be incorrect to say that the measures undertaken have not produced results. Simultaneously, it would be equally incorrect to assume that the mission is complete. There are various hurdles in the way of successful and speedy implementation of the programme which, if removed, has tremendous potentiality to change the Indian rural economy, society, as well as polity.

11.8 KEY WORDS

Land Reforms : Generally understood by the term, land reforms refers to redistribution of land but its scope subsumes abolition of intermediary tenures, tenancy reforms, ceiling of landholdings, consolidation of holdings, compilation and updating of land records.

- Zamindari System** : Zamindar normally means a non-cultivating landlord. The system was introduced by the British in 1793 which separated ownership of land from managerial and labour functions. Under the system, Zamindars were declared full proprietors of large chunks of land and in return they collected rent from the farmers.
- Joint Family** : It consists of members related through blood and spread over three or more generation, living together under a common roof and work under a common head.
- Dominant Caste** : M.N. Srinivas introduced the concept. The determinants of dominance of the caste in a region could be sizeable land ownership, numerical strength, high ritual status, economic and political power, and education level.

11.9 SUGGESTED READINGS

- Andre Beteille, (1971) '*Caste, Class and Power*,' London: University of California Press.
- Annual Report (2005-2006). Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India.
- Dutt, Rudra and Sudershan, K.P.M. '*Indian Economy*,' Delhi: S. Chand & Co.
- Jha, Gulab (1990), '*Caste and the Communist Movement in Bihar*,' New Delhi: Commonwealth Publication,
- Joshi, P. C., (1975) '*Land Reforms in India, Trends and Perspectives*,' Delhi: Institute of Economic Growth.
- MacIver, R. M. and Charles H. Page: '*Society: An Introductory Analysis*,' Delhi: Macmillan India.
- Rao, C. N. Shankar, (2004) '*Sociology of Indian Society*,' New Delhi: S. Chand & Co.