

LAND REFORMS AND DALITS IN ANDHRA PRADESH: A SOUTH INDIAN STATE

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Abstract: Land being a factor of production in all the stages of economy and it also plays a diabolical role in the life of rural people. Being the main source of subsistence, land metamorphoses into a socio-economic reality. In the third world countries, land as a productive asset plays an important role not only in the functioning of rural economies, but also in changing fortunes of families and socio-economic groups. Since land is the prime source of income in rural India, around 85% of the rural population of India, directly or indirectly, depends on land and its produce. Land is not only prime source of income but also a symbol of social status in rural India. The land distribution pattern in India in agriculture continues to be skewed. This skewed distribution of land in India is intrinsically related to the caste system. A small number of big landlords own a large extent of land while the millions of marginal and small peasants own small extents of land. While the large landowners belong to the so-called upper castes, the cultivators belong to the middle castes and the agricultural workers mostly belong to the weaker sections such as Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. To reduce inequalities land reforms have been attempted in India soon after the independence. As part of national policy, the government of Andhra Pradesh has also implemented several land reforms. In the case of Andhra Pradesh several land legislations to augment the production and to reduce the inequalities in the distribution of land. But even today, the land is concentrated in the hands of some of the social upper strata, and nearly 89% of Dalits, there who are denied social and economic equality since long time are retain as landless and agricultural

labourers. 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 period. And it also an attempt to assess the impact of land reforms on Dalits land ownership in Andhra Pradesh.

Keywords: Caste, Dalits, Economic equality, Landreforms, Skewed distribution

INTRODUCTION

Land being a factor of production in all the stages of economy and it also plays a diabolical role in the life of rural people. Being the main source of subsistence, land metamorphoses into a socio-economic reality. In the third world countries, land as a productive asset plays an important role not only in the functioning of rural economies, but also in changing fortunes of families and socio-economic groups. Other things being equal, larger the control over land by a family, or a group of relatively homogenous set of families, the greater is its socio-economic and political power.

Since land is the prime source of income in rural India, around 85% of the rural population of India, directly or indirectly, depends on land and its produce. By and large the size of income in rural areas continues to be closely related to the amount of land owned or controlled. Land is not only prime source of income but also a symbol of social status in rural India. The land distribution pattern in India in agriculture continues to be skewed. This skewed distribution of land in India is intrinsically related to the caste system. A small number of big landlords

own a large extent of land while the millions of marginal and small peasants own small extents of land. While the large landowners belong to the so-called upper castes, the cultivators belong to the middle castes and the agricultural workers mostly belong to the weaker sections such as Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. To reduce inequalities land reforms have been attempted in India soon after the independence. As part of national policy, the government of Andhra Pradesh has also implemented several lands. In the case of Andhra Pradesh several land legislations to augment the production and to reduce the inequalities in the distribution of land. But even today, the land is concentrated in the hands of some of the social upper strata, and nearly 89% of Dalits, there who are denied social and economic equality since long time are retain as landless and agricultural labourers. 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 period. And it also an attempt to assess the impact of land reforms on Dalits land ownership in Andhra Pradesh.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA SOURCES

The Data used in this paper has been collected from Population Census 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. Simple percentages have been calculated for the effective analysis and clarity of data.

LAND AND CASTES IN COLONIAL ANDHRA:

As mentioned earlier, land is the prime factor that determines economic position and social status in rural India as well as in Andhra Pradesh. 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 *Rayoitwari* and *Inamdari Zamindari* system 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 Nuzividu. The estate holders of Challapalli, Vuyawrmuctyla etc, were *Kammas*, while the Mungala *Zamindar* belonged to the *Reddy* Caste¹.

The landlords of the *Ryotwari* region were also overwhelmingly from the non-Brahmin upper caste *Reddis* in Rayalaseema; *Kammas*, *Rajus* and *Reddies* in Coastal Andhra; and primarily *Velamas* in Telangana region². 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 1982³. Another village study in the Rayalaseema area shows that the ownership of land by Brahmins declined from 36% in 1891 to 3% in 1982⁴. 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 *Rytwari* systems – led to the concentration of lands in the hands of a few non-Brahmin dominant upper caste people.

Table 1: Caste and Agrarian occupation, 1921

State	Actual Workers	Recorded principle occupation (%)			Female workers			
		Income from rent of land	Cultivators	Field labourers	Percentage of female to male workers	Income from rent	Cultivators	Field labourers
Madras state(1911)								
Brahman,telugu	27,029	34.53	32.37	0.29	26.69	54.60	34.74	0.11
Brahman,Canarese	10,647	13.96	71.89	0.08	28.10	14.74	69.25	0.40
Holeya	29,696	--	3.29	75.46	37.73	--	2.45	84.43
Mala	196,259	0.18	14.78	71.89	85.53	0.16	8.48	87.55
Madiga	79,924	1.17	10.71	54.71	70.69	3.98	2.89	82.31
Hyderabad state1921								
Brahmin	79,345	7.37	17.52	0.32	18.12	15.68	33.97	--
Maratha	500,638	6.99	60.90	16.33	63.03	3.06	54.60	31.71
Lingayat	170,508	3.50	9.01	1.30	52.49	6.44	16.73	1.92
Kapu	291,130	1.60	51.56	26.15	50.95	1.21	70.07	19.75
Telaga	146,230	1.01	61.22	15.68	75.22	1.08	57.26	20.87
Mala	130,008	3.79	8.40	8.25(65.3)	98.83	2.66	13.90	39.50(37.24)
Madiga	203,492	0.65	10.28	10.16(83.5)	84.63	1.00	7.86	38.94(73.55)
Chambhar	37,991	1.07	4.21	7.69	59.70	0.76	10.37	2.98

Source: Omvedt,Gail(1994): Dalits and the democratic revolution- Dr.Ambedkar and the dalit movement in colonial India, Sage Publications,New Delhi,Pp 77-79

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 colonial period they constituted the bulk of the agricultural labour force and worked as farm servants and casual labourers.(table 1 & 2) most of the Dalits were depended upon their tradition work for their subsistence as livelihood.

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 tenant, 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 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*' where as 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 land less labourers. However these struggles did effect a change in their lives, especially at the level of wages.

Table 2: Caste and Occupations, 1931

S. No	Name of the caste	Traditional occupation	Percentage of persons dependent on traditional occupation	Percentage of persons dependent on traditional cultivation	Percentage of persons dependent on field labour
1	Baliya	Traders	11.7	53.0	16.8
2	Bramhan	Priest	10.7	71.4	0.2
3	Besta/Mutrachi	Fishing/hunting	57.8	15.1	18.6
4	Chakali/Mangali	Washermen/barbers	69.6	9.0	13.8
5	Devanga/Sale	Weavers	68.5	5.8	9.5
6	Golla/Goundia	Shepherds/toddy tapers	71.9	5.5	18.3
7	Indian Christian	Agriculture/ labours	--	25.1	17.4
8	Kamsali	Metal and wood workers	69.9	13.4	3.8
9	Kapu/Telega	Cultivation	71.4	--	29.4
10	Madiga	Leather works	17.3	8.6	66.1
11	Mala	Agriculture/labour	79.0	12.0	0.05
12	Reddy/Velema	Cultivation	71.4	---	28.7
13	Sale	Weavers	63.6	7.8	13.6
14	Tribes	Hunters/foodgatherers	67.7	6.9	17.6

Source: Satyanarayana, A. *Nation, Caste and the Past: articulation of dalitbahujana identity, consciousness and ideology, presidential address, india history congress, Bareilly, U.P., 2004, pp12*

LAND LEGISLATIONS IN POST INDEPENDENCE ANDHRA PRADESH – AN OVERVIEW

The Indian government felt that it was necessary to protect the interest of the tillers to land and bring equity in agriculture, and abolish intermediary land tenure. Even the five year plans gave top priority to land reforms which included abolition of intermediaries, tenancy reforms, imposition of ceilings on landholdings, distribution of surplus land, allotment of government land, consolidation of holdings and protection of lands of Scheduled castes and Tribes⁵. The following are the important land legislations in Andhra Pradesh. These land legislations were separately enacted in Andhra and Telangana regions as per the prevailing conditions: (a) Andhra Pradesh (Andhra Area) Estates Land (Reduction of Rent) Act, 1947: The major objective of this Act was to provide for reduction of rents payable to *ryots* in Estates approximate to the level of assessment levied on lands in *Ryotwari* area in the neighborhood. (b) The Madras Estate (Abolition and Conversion into *Ryotwari*) Act, 1948: It provided for the repeal of the permanent settlement, the acquisition of the rights of land – holders in

permanently settled and certain other estates in the province of Andhra and the introduction of the

Ryotwari settlement in such estates. “Estate” means a *Zamindari* or under-tenure or an *Inam* Estate. This act extends to the whole state of Andhra. (c) The Andhra Pradesh (Telangana Area) Tenancy and Agricultural Lands Act, 1950. The major objectives of this Act are (i) to regulate the relations of landlords and tenants of agricultural lands (2) to regulate alienations of land (3) to prevent excessive subdivision of agricultural holdings (4) to provide for the legislation of co-operative farm and (5) to empower Government to assume in certain circumstances management of agricultural lands. (d) Andhra *Inams* (Abolition and Conversion into *Ryotwari*) Act, 1956 to abolish and convert certain *Inam* lands into *Ryotwari* lands. It extends to the whole of the state of Andhra but applies only to *Inam* lands. (e) Andhra Tenancy Act of 1956 provides for the payment of fair rent by cultivating tenants and for fixing the minimum period of agricultural leases in the State. (f) The Andhra Pradesh ceiling on Agricultural Holdings Act, 1961 provides for the imposition of ceiling on agricultural holdings ranging from 27 acres to 324 acres depending upon the class of land. (g) The

Andhra Pradesh Land Reform (ceiling on Agricultural Holdings) Act, 1972, which provides for a ceiling area of one standard holding ranging from 4.05 Hectares (10 acres) to 10.93 hectares (about 27 acres) in the case of wetland and from 14-16 hectares (35 acres) to 21-85 hectares (54 acres) in case of dry land.

In Addition to these land reforms and legislations, with the aim of providing minimum source of income and promoting social and economic well being of the poor landless people, the government distributed the surplus land made available from land ceiling. As on September 30, 1996, about 52.13 lakh acres was distributed at the All India level. Of these, about 18.08 lakh acres of land was distributed to SCs, 7.31 lakh acres to STs and 26.74 lakh acres for non-SC/ST persons. A total 51.21 lakh beneficiaries have been covered so far of which 18.49 lakh were SCs, 7.19 lakh ST and 25.53 lakh non-SC/ST. The land distribution per beneficiary in the SC category household comes to 0.977 acres, which was less than corresponding 1.047 acres for non-SC/ST households⁶. As on September 30, 2004 an area of about 5.29 lakh acres at Andhra Pradesh State level (including agricultural land and house sites)⁷ was distributed. Of this about 2.26 lakh acres of land was distributed to SC's 1.19 lakh acres to ST's and 2.36 lakh acres to non-SC/STs. A total of 4.67 lakh beneficiaries have been covered so far of whom 2.24 lakh are SCs, 0.84 lakh are STs and 2.16 lakh are non-SC/STs. The land distributed per beneficiary in the SC category households works out to 1.0 acres which is less than what non SC house holds obtained (1.1 acres) This shows that even in the redistribution there is a continuing bias against the SC/ST sections of society.

Land reforms in India helped to abolish all forms of intermediaries in terms of landholdings viz, *Zamindari*, *Inamdari* and *landlord* system. Those tilling the land at the time of the abolition of intermediaries were conferred ownership rights and tenants were given protection. The protection and enlargement of control and command over land are crucial issues for the poor. It is estimated that all efforts taken together including *Bhoodan* and distribution of government wasteland accounted for less than 10 percent of the cultivated land⁸. It may not be possible for all rural poor to be accommodated but there is scope for utilizing the wasteland for providing access to the poor and also eliminating the biases against the poor in land relations. The desire to possess land is strong among the poor as ownership of land denotes one's social status. The small extent of the declared surplus was due mainly to the poor legislation with large number of loopholes. Thus, the opportunity for a more equitable distribution of land was lost. However the abolition of intermediaries and

imposition of land ceiling on land-holdings had, over time, contributed to the growth of capitalist farming and arrested concentration of land ownership⁹. Although intermediate land tenure system could be effectively removed through *Zamindari* abolition, equity in the agrarian structure could not be brought about. Concentration of land shifted from a few individuals to a few communities. In this context, one needs to review the implementation of the land reforms. The following paragraphs will examine whether or not the really needy acquired land through these land reforms; what were the hurdles in the implementation of land reforms; and on the whole what was the outcome of land reform policies.

ANALYSIS OF DATA AVAILABLE ON LAND HOLDING PATTERNS - WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO DALITS

It could be seen from the table 6 that the marginal holdings constitute 46.6% of total operational holdings but control only 9.3% of total operated area in 1976-77. Small holdings constitute 20.3% of total holdings but control 12.8% of total operated area. Marginal and small together constitute nearly 67% of total holdings but control only 22% of operated area in 1976-77. On the other hand, medium and large holdings together constitute about 15% of total operational holdings but control 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 area operated under their control increased to only 22.68% of total operated area. On the other hand, the number of medium and large holdings declined to 5.43% of total operational holdings but control nearly 25.09% of total area. If we take large holdings alone their share is only 0.5% of total holdings but control nearly 6.5% of 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 number or marginal holdings increased from 46.6% to 61.58% but the operated area under their control was only 22.68% of total operated area in 2005-06. this implies that in the post-independence period inequalities in the distribution of land has increased despite land reform. The increase in the marginal holdings may be attributed to population explosion and also to redistribution of small pieces 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 from rentier class to owner cultivated classes, but not to the lands less poor.

Table 3: The details of surplus land as per APLR (August 2004)

1)	Total No. declarations filed	4,46,826
2)	Total No. of declarations disposed of	4,45,194
3)	Balance to be disposed of	1,632
4)	Extent declared Surplus	Ac. 7,89,910.14 Cts.
5)	Extent taken possession from the declarants	- 6,46,521.30 -
6)	Extent distributed to individual beneficiaries	- 5,82,235.09 -

Table 4: The details of land assignments for agriculture and house sites at State level

Assigned for Agriculture purpose		Assigned for House site purpose		
<i>Caste</i>	No. of benef.	Extent assigned	No. of benef.	Extent assigned
S.C.'s	1,99,587	2,25,331.38	24,626	1,369.42
S.T.s	73,518	1,18,708.93	11,135	759.74
BC & OC's	1,94,307	2,34,686.20	22,512	1,379.42
	4,67,412	5,78,726.51	58,273	3,508.58

TOTAL= Beneficiaries- 5, 25,685; Distributed- Acr. 5, 82,235.09

Table 5: Surplus land covered by Court litigation

Name of the Court	No. of Cases pending	Extent involved
L.R.T.(RDO's)	654	Ac. 55,318.00 Cts.
L.R.A.T.	552	Ac. 34,389.27 Cts.
High Court	1163	Ac. 43,629.56 Cts.
Supreme Court of India	389	Ac. 14,113.50 Cts.
Total	2758	Ac. 1,47,450.33 Cts.

Table 6: Operational holdings and operated area by different size groups in Andhra Pradesh State level, 1976-77 to 1995-96(Nos in lakhs, Area in lakh Hect)

Size group	1976-77		1980-81		1990-91		2000-01		2005-06	
	Nos	Area	Nos	Area	Nos	Area	Nos	Area	Nos	Area
Marginal	28.69 (46.6)	13.36 (9.3)	38.04 (51.6)	18.86 (13.1)	52.11 (56.1)	23.69 (16.4)	70.2 (60.9)	31.0 (21.6)	74.18 (61.58)	32.87 (22.68)
Small	12.52 (20.3)	18.36 (12.8)	15.91 (21.6)	24.12 (16.8)	19.72 (21.2)	28.26 (19.5)	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)	13.45 (14.5)	36.4 (25.2)	14.2 (12.3)	37.9 (26.4)	14.44 (11.98)	38.35 (26.46)
Medium	7.53 (12.2)	46.47 (32.3)	6.46 (8.8)	39.79 (27.8)	6.44 (6.93)	37.77 (26.1)	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)	1.18 (1.27)	18.48 (12.8)	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)	92.9 (100)	144.6 (100)	115.3 (100)	143.9 (100)	120.4 (100)	144.8 (100)

Source: Report on Agricultural Census of Andhra Pradesh, 2001, Note: figures in parenthesis indicates the percentage

Table 7: Percentage distribution of operational holdings and operated area of different social groups in Andhra Pradesh

Category	1976-77		1980-81		1990-91		1995-96		2000-01		2005-06	
	Nos	Area	Nos	Area	Nos	Area	Nos	Area	Nos	Area	Nos	Area
S.C	13.4	6.9	12.6	6.9	12.73	7.48	12.12	7.42	11.85	7.86	11.80	7.84
S.T	6.3	6.2	6.4	6.3	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	80.39	85.29	80.77	85.02	80.66	83.91	80.49	83.80
Total	100	100	100	100	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Various issues of Report on SC/ST Land Holdings

Table 8: Percentage distribution of operational holdings and area operated by scheduled castes in Andhra Pradesh

Size group	1976-77		1980-81		1990-91		1995-96		2000-01		2005-06	
	Nos	Area	Nos	Area	Nos	Area	Nos	Area	Nos	Area	Nos	Area
Marginal	64.8	22.3	67.7	27.6	70.67	31.98	73.46	37.15	73.84	36.45	74.59	38.32
Small	19.0	23.1	18.9	26.2	18.43	28.28	17.75	29.74	17.64	29.53	17.42	30.21
Semi-medium	11.5	26.0	10.2	25.2	8.70	24.40	7.39	22.51	6.98	21.33	6.63	20.90
Medium	4.1	21.5	2.9	15.2	2.03	12.38	1.32	8.82	1.42	9.36	1.27	8.64
Large	0.6	7.1	0.3	5.5	0.17	2.96	0.08	1.78	0.12	3.33	0.09	1.93
All groups	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100.0	100.0

Source: Various issues of Report on SC/ST Land Holdings

Table 9: 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	0.41
Small	1.45	1.46	1.40	1.40	1.39	1.39	1.38
Semi-medium	2.69	2.62	2.56	2.56	2.53	2.54	2.52
Medium	6.21	5.66	5.59	5.58	5.53	5.47	5.44
Large	14.65	16.48	14.41	16.00	19.00	21.88	16.49
All groups	1.19	1.06	0.95	0.91	0.83	0.83	0.80

Source: Various issues of Report on SC/ST Land Holdings

Table 10: 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	2.63	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	14.33
All groups	2.33	1.91	1.80	1.64	1.44	1.37	1.31

Source: Various issues of Report on SC/ST land Holdings

As a fact major proportion of medium and large holdings are belongs to the upper strata and the marginal and small farmers are belongs to the lower strata.

Table 7 explains the operational holdings and area operated by different social groups since 1976-77 to 2005-06 at Andhra Pradesh state level. In 1976-77 SC households constituted about 13.4% of total holdings but control only 6.9% of the area, while others constitute about 80.3% of total holdings but control 87% of total operated area. By 2005-06 the percentage of SC holdings declined to about 11.80% and their controlling area share slightly increased to 7.84%. While the percentage of others' holdings retains the same i.e. 80.4% and their operated area share slightly declined to 83.80% of total operated area. In 1976-77, ST operational holdings constitute 6.3% of total holdings and control 6.2% of total operated area. By 2005-06 their holdings increased 7.69% while their share in area also increased to 8.36%. Scheduled Tribes average holdings also increased more than the Scheduled Castes average land holdings. The position of ST households in terms of operational holdings is better than SC households at Andhra Pradesh state level as well as all India level.

From table 8 it is noted that, most of the SC are small or marginal farmers. In 1976-77 marginal and smallholdings of SCs constituted 83%(control nearly 46% of total operated area of SCs) of total holdings and their percentage tremendously increased to about 92.01%(control nearly 68.53% of total operated area of SCs) in 2005-06, on the other hand medium and large holdings declined from 4.7% (control nearly 29% of total operated area of SC) to 1.36%(control nearly 10.59% of total operated area of SC) 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. Due to lack of irrigation facilities, high cost of cultivation, high cost of mechanization, these vulnerable sections were losing control on their lands. Most of the SCs and STs have been forced to sell their lands to others, mostly those from upper caste communities due to debt burden and are reduced to the status of agricultural labourers in search of their livelihood¹⁰.

Even as Andhra Pradesh, along with West Bengal and Jammu and Kashmir, is one of the few states to have substantially redistributed the government held land and despite giving the stipulated percentages for SC/ST the above information reveals that most of the land continues to be in the hands of upper caste. Neither the constitutional provisions nor the resultant land reform measures ensured any appreciable percentage of Dalits getting land.

On the one hand the population share of Dalits in total population has been increasing whereas their share in land ownership has been deteriorating over the years. SCs percentage in total population increased from 15.93 percent in 1991 to 16.7 percent in 2001, but their share in total holdings declined from 12.73 percent to 11.80 per cent and their share in total area also retain same during 1991 to 2005-06. In case of STs their share in total holdings and area has significantly increased, but most of their land is rocky and unfertile. In case of non-SC/STs population share in total population slightly declined from 77.76 per cent in 1991 to 77.22 percent in 2001, but still they are holding 80.49 percent of share in total holdings and 83.80 percent share in total area during 2005-06. It indicates that the Dalits share in total holdings and area has not increased proportionately to their population despite AP government's distribution of both government and surplus land for the last five years.

From 1.11.69 to 19.11.2000 AP government distributed 10, 88,473.96 acres (all types of land) to about 9, 71,999 landless dalits(table: 1:10, 1:11, 1:12) Despite government's distribution of land to the dalits, the average size of land holdings of dalits, number of landholders and the area under SC ownership has not increased as per Directorate of Economics and Statistics Report. The reasons for this anomaly are not difficult to ascertain. Quite often assignments were only given on paper and physical possession for many has been a distant dream. Even when physical possession was obtained the lands distributed were mostly degraded lands. As the government did not have any comprehensive plan for the development of the lands distributed to the poor, supporting them with subsidies and incentives the beneficiaries often they had to alienate the land to pay up the debts incurred in attempting to develop the lands assigned to them.

CONCLUSION

In the distant past the dalits were forbidden to possess land on account of religiously sanctioned and socially enforced caste prescriptions. In the feudal times dalits did not and could not have a place in the scheme of things set up by the rulers for a smoother and more profitable collection of taxes. In the struggles waged by the Communists against exploiting zamindars too dalits could not gain access to land to the extent equity called for. The land reforms policies too failed to fulfill the promise the state had made to the dalit landless agricultural labourers. The nexus between feudal economy, caste hegemony and a bureaucracy steeped in vested interest continues to deny dalit their rightful share of land. 71.79% of dalits still remain landless or own smallholdings of less than an acre.

Table 11: Land Distributed By Government of Andhra Pradesh to Landless Poor 01-11-1969 to 25-01-2005

Name of the District	SCs		STs		BCs		Others		Total	
	Nos	Extent	Nos	Extent	Nos	Extent	Nos	Extent	Nos	Extent
Srikakulam	19325	15689.47	25324	21159.34	19158	15279.06	25297	20791.95	89104	72919.82
Vizianagaram	19412	22978.45	24757	30515.67	19083	22076.29	24601	30127.68	87853	105698.1
Visakhapatnam	24323	34653.76	34838	55183.01	24319	33958.21	33253	47561.08	116733	171356.1
EastGodavary	15450	12431.01	20686	20301.43	13805	11235.02	20379	16608.17	70320	60575.63
West Godavary	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
Gunture	21228	21236.68	26405	20400.2	19011	14877.45	28572	22292.9	95216	78807.23
Kurnool	17460	25857.59	21247	31498	16461	24966.44	22856	33859.97	78024	116182
Nellore	64745	100337.7	74291	117921.8	57595	89756.18	78907	126735.1	275538	434750.7
Cuddapah	29322	53215.5	34355	63017.83	26778	49131.8	39298	72575.26	129753	237940.4
Prakasam	46055	71292.81	55930	87136.31	41321	64778.45	60967	40730.52	204273	263938.1
Chittoor	63244	86642.64	79014	109261.1	57128	78670.91	84796	117026.7	284182	391601.3
Ananthapur	53870	137311.6	67187	171846.9	50826	129325.1	72703	185741.5	244586	624225.1
Adilabad	19763	48877.4	27147	69515.06	18201	45223.78	25671	65115.43	90782	228731.7
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
Khammam	28791	59223.28	41794	79377.57	25379	53585.7	38124	79949.72	134088	272136.3
Warangal	39155	39212.27	49275	49368.25	35998	35935.51	52173	52296.68	176601	176812.7
Mahabubnagar	29529	48206.07	35889	59630.66	27611	45120.01	38124	63361.07	131153	216317.8
Rangareddy	16530	15747.46	20701	19758.12	15205	14727.78	22122	21052.7	74558	71486.06
Nalgonda	38962	37896.33	44291	44484.18	34497	34010.37	45539	45397.14	163289	161788
Medak	36472	54494.53	44697	67895.47	34023	50460.81	48584	73564.51	163776	246415.3
Hyderabad	-									
Total	687018 (22.41)	988474 (22.50)	852972 (27.83)	1246839 (28.38)	629735 (20.55)	907720.3 (20.66)	895289 (29.71)	1250659 (28.46)	3065014 (100.0)	4393692 (100.0)

Source: Sreenivasulu and others, Land Reforms in Andhra Pradesh (Telugu), Telugu academy, Hyderabad, 2001, Pp: 99

Table 12: District wise and Category wise Assignment of Government Land during 26-01-2005 and 21-08-2005(area in acres)

District	Total allotted land	Total beneficiaries	Social group wise			
			SC	ST	BC	Others
Srikakulam	19338	19258	2530	8122	5866	2740
Vizianagaram	9798	9444	2630	2933	3656	225
Visakhapatnam	36771	18860	1479	118 20	4177	13584
EastGodavary	7860	4117	681	2772	412	252
West Godavary	10962	10629	3887	609	3843	2290
Krishna	8125	7762	3382	429	2647	1172
Gunture	6098	5166	1857	1034	1416	797
Prakasam	20400	13548	6132	799	3749	2688

Nellore	28728	23235	8975	3511	7619	2665
Chittor	9408	7940	3338	697	2361	1323
Cuddapah	14978	8868	3464	643	2228	2338
Ananthapur	15727	6727	1826	700	2930	1202
Kurnool	12420	6861	2382	502	3254	502
Khammam	9224	6580	1515	3348	1149	439
Warangal	6630	6531	2011	1869	2465	167
Karimnagar	8997	11469	5702	865	4464	403
Adilabad	25850	10497	2220	5104	2784	320
Medak	32287	29825	10397	2404	14256	1554
Mahabubnagar	10835	8010	2929	959	3634	452
Nizamabad	949431	7535	2090	1625	3288	359
Nalgonda	16334	15019	4826	3558	5699	829
Rangareddy	5338	3254	1029	629	1322	236
Total	325639	241135	75282 (31.22)	54932 (22.78)	82919 (34.39)	24337 (11.61)

Source: Chief Commissioner of Land Administration, Govt. of Andhra Pradesh, Note Figures in the parenthesis indicates the percentages

Table 13: District wise and Category wise Assignment of Government Land in third phase of land distribution dated on 19-11-2006(area in acres)

District	Total allotted land	Total beneficiaries	Social group wise			
			SC	ST	BC	Others
Srikakulam	6618.29	5095	691	2649	1649	106
Vizianagaram	6000	5095	260	680	1649	158
Visakhapatnam	5877.98	4400	0	1941	3302	0
EastGodavari	2247.41	1941	207	704	0	99
West Godavari	5001.62	1143	1756	156	133	278
Krishna	1947.39	5603	585	85	3413	649
Gunture	3975.1	2008	1744	486	689	596
Prakasam	6730.8	3456	1449	230	630	1029
Nellore	6007.79	3515	1734	609	807	723
Chittor	8050.37	4349	2261	516	1283	2623
Cuddapah	6912.47	5736	931	383	1767	983
Ananthapur	11705.36	3485	728	483	1188	1309
Kurnool	4769.82	4256	777	201	1736	368
Khammam	3593.01	2174	298	1692	828	70
Warangal	4785.5	2194	2266	1661	134	70

Karimnagar	42201.81	5128	1188	608	1131	233
Adilabad	4724.94	2935	384	916	491	82
Medak	5501.55	4583	1625	456	2201	301
Mahabubnagar	4545.35	2884	982	229	1424	249
Nizamabad	3249.8	2613	635	434	1324	220
Nalgonda	4349.55	3802	1289	864	1443	206
Rangareddy	594.95	377	127	144	75	31
Total	111380.9	73550 (100.0)	21917 (29.80)	16127 (21.13)	26554 (36.10)	8952 (12.17)

Source: Chief Commissioner of Land Administration, Govt. of Andhra Pradesh, Note Figures in the parenthesis indicates the percentages

Lack of political will, apathetic attitude of the bureaucracy and absence of up-to-date land records are some of the major factors mentioned by the planning commission Task Force for the poor implementation of land reforms. The following categories of land are still available for assignment; 1.Government lands, 2.Bhoodan lands, 3.ceiling surplus land, 4.Endowment land, 5.wakf land, 6.Inam land, 7.Canal embankments, 8.Joint Farming Society lands, 9.Sada Bainama lands etc. There is unanimity of opinion regarding how dismal has been the implementation of each and every provision of the Land Reform Policy. Even the flawed implementation has gone in favor of the dominant classes. Thus when it comes to the Dalit community the failure of the land reform policy is even more glaring.

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