



"Morning to evening I weed out the fields", says Vannurappa, a Dudekula-Muslim in his 70s on his way back home after work, Rural Anantapur.  
Photo Credit: Rahul M.

# Exclusion and Expulsion in Agriculture

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## 1. Introduction

Agriculture and production of food has been the fundamental premise of growth of all known civilizations. In fact, agriculture presents itself as a home for the majority of human labour, even to this day. As per the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), in 2010, about 2.6 billion people around the world were dependent on agriculture for their livelihoods either as actively engaged workers or as dependants, while about half of the world's population lived in rural areas and of these, about three-quarters were estimated to be living in agricultural households (FAOSTAT, 2013 as cited in Alston & Pardey, 2014, p.1).

The classical economic transition school, in a visual reminiscent of colonial Europe of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries that saw an agrarian transition, envisions our diverse world following a universal pattern of 'evolution' or transition from agrarian societies to industrial or post-industrial complexes with overwhelming majorities of human labour outside of agriculture. It insists that such a transition is both a universal path to build on and a solution to address under-development and poverty in the global south.

While it could be argued that, in its full manifestation, such a transition is both historically impossible and ecologically undesirable in a

country like India, this essay focuses on who suffers the costs of such a transition; and consequently who is excluded 'from' and 'in' agriculture.

It is often said that both Indian agriculture and the labour market exclude. The exclusion is of the most vulnerable sections dependent on agriculture.<sup>1</sup> Since those who are most excluded in agriculture end up in the informal labour pool, where they continue to face exclusions, unsurprisingly the informal labour reservoirs in India are comprised of those who are most marginalized—the indigenous, Dalits, landless, migrant workers, refugees and so on.<sup>2</sup> Women also constitute an important segment of this pool. However, as per the International Labour Organization (ILO), between 2004 and 2011, when the Indian economy grew at a healthy average of about 7 per cent, there was a decline in female participation in the country's labour force from over 35 per cent to 25 per cent.

At one level, it could be said that the long history of discrimination based on caste, religion and identity, resulting in multiple denials of education, resources, employment opportunities, etc., has kept a large section of people away from securing a decent and dignified livelihood and employment in the non-agricultural sector. This indeed is the case with many in the non-agricultural sector, and such causalities are rather well documented (Sharma, 2007; Thorat, 2009; Rawal, 2014; Anand, 2016). At a more fundamental level, however, the real

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issue in need of analysis is the continued process of exclusion in agriculture as well as the tenability and desirability of creating wage labour reserves, and the resolution of the deepening outcomes of exclusion and deprivation. This way we ought to steer the primary agrarian question in India in favour of the populations who have faced multiple denials.

## **2. Trajectories of Exclusion from Agriculture**

Over the decades after independence, exclusion from agriculture has operated in three distinct, yet inter-related trajectories.

### **2.1 A History of Feudal Dispossession and Caste-based Exclusion from Land**

The question of who owns agricultural land and land in general and who does not, from the past, is an important one. With rural landlessness mounting up, this question constitutes the unfulfilled promise of land redistribution in India. In fact, it was the promise of land and dignity that spurred our national liberation struggle. The land question in India is one of historic exclusion; an overhang of feudal history and caste relations coupled with a clear lack of political action over the past decades. It still constitutes an unfinished agenda of land reforms (MRD Report, 2013), but it is not just an unfinished agenda in its longer historical sense. In the last six decades too, there has been a drastic fall in the category of 'cultivators' and a corresponding increase in the category of agricultural labourers. In 1951, for instance, the percentage of cultivators was 71.9 per cent and that of agriculture workers was 28.1 per cent. The figure in 2011, however, stood at 45.1 per cent cultivators and 54.9 per cent agricultural labourers (Agriculture Statistics at a Glance, 2014, GOI, Ministry of Agriculture). This fall represents a continued process of de-peasantization without

land reforms and redistribution, often premised on the reasoning that there is not enough land for all.

### **2.2 The Trajectory of a Gradual yet Continual Commodification-Corporatization of Agriculture and the Starvation of Peasant Agriculture**

This tendency can be broadly summarized as a dual process that operates to push people out of agriculture, through such justifications that people wish to leave agriculture and move to a better city life, on the one hand, and encourage corporate/contract farming and land leasing for capitalist agriculture, on the other. While several state governments such as Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Punjab and Tamil Nadu are actively promoting contract farming, changing laws to enable and support it, and providing interested companies with a variety of incentives, including lifting of land ceilings, subsidies and tax rebates, others like the West Bengal government are under active pressure to shift their policy towards contract farming (Ghosh, 2003).

While the role of private companies and corporates has been increasing in agriculture, the public investment is dwindling. The decline in agricultural investments started in the 1980s and is continuing till date. The share of agricultural investment to total public investment, for instance, declined from 15.3 per cent in 1980–81 to less than 8 per cent in 2009–10 (Jha & Acharya, 2011). The share of the budget for agriculture in the overall budget and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is stagnant at 2.25 per cent and 0.30 per cent respectively for the past five years (CBGA, 2016).

Starvation of Peasant Agriculture has operated through the following conjoined processes:

- a) Stagnation in public financing for agriculture through reduction of subsidies to small holder farming, and farming in general, with

its differential impact on those who have less land.

- b) Slow down and reduction in agriculture extension services, research, coverage and increased privatization of such services.
- c) Stagnation in irrigation coverage and lack of investments in revival of traditional water harvesting mechanisms, particularly for rain-fed areas.
- d) Increase in the area under cash crops and commercial agriculture.
- e) Limited increase in minimum support prices for small farmers.
- f) Increase in dependence on world food trade demands and associated volatility

### **2.3 An Active Process of Dispossession of Land of those who Managed to 'Hang On', Despite Decades of Negative Pressure on Peasant Agriculture**

Such a process operates through what, in the Indian context, is called 'Land Acquisition' and what, in the continent of Africa, is referred to squarely as land grabs. Some even pose and generalize this process as 'development induced displacement' (Terminski, 2013); an irony whose spuriousness never escapes those ousted from agriculture. According to Dr Walter Fernandes, the figure of persons displaced/affected by such development projects is estimated at around 60 million for the period from 1947 to 2004, involving 25 million hectares of land which includes 6 million hectares of other common property resources (CPRs) (Fernandes, 2007). This process of displacement has in fact impacted tribal populations disproportionately. The tribals constituting 8 per cent of the population have shouldered 55 per cent of the displacement till 1995 in the name of development. In so far as this scramble for land or accumulation by active

dispossession is concerned, its main thrust is to establish large scale farming and extractive enclaves for the export of food, biofuels, minerals and energy resources by means of value chains integrated into a global market and monopolies thereof, and bolstered where needed (such as in North and other parts of Africa, for instance) by militarization (CARES report on The Agrarian Question: Past, Present and Future, 2012, p. 5)

This scramble, together with the starvation of peasant agriculture and an unwillingness to redistribute land, is responsible for the expulsion of a mass of people to labour reserve pools; a large army of wage workers, in a race to the bottom, constitute the core of the agrarian question in the South.

Beyond the escalation in the proportion of dispossession—over the past two decades, the critical question is who has evacuated? With the data currently available from national statistics, empirically it may not be possible to segregate such evacuations and assign them to the specific trajectories listed above. But what is clear is that 7.7 million peasants have left farming in one decade (an average of 2035 per day) as per our National Census Data. Many others are in the processes of searching for other possibilities, while still engaged in farming for the months when rainwater is available. Even in areas where land dispossession is not extensive, virtually all peasant farmers practise more than subsistence agriculture. They contribute to the swelling number of circular, seasonal or temporary migrants; many of them being distressed migrants. Millions of farmers and labourers who are affected migrated to cities in search of work. An ActionAid India study on drought across seven states, conducted in 2016, reported extensive migration to cities.

A constellation of these factors gives a multi-occupational colour, which several refer to as semi-proletarianization<sup>3</sup> (Moyo, Jha & Yeros, 2013), and

### Box 1: Drought Refugees

Lack of work and income in drought-affected areas has forced people to migrate in huge numbers to nearby towns and cities in search of work and livelihood. 'Migration from the affected districts has increased two to three times as people suffering due to drought are leaving their habitations for survival' (Mander, 2016). Sphere India's situation report indicated that, due to lack of livelihood opportunities, 60% of the young population in Bundelkhand areas of Madhya Pradesh migrated to other cities and states (Sphere India Report on SITREP: Drought in Bundelkhand Region of UP & MP and Maharashtra, 2016, p.3). In Telangana, according to farmers' organizations, nearly 1.4 million people have migrated from the worst-affected districts of Mahabubnagar, Ranga Reddy, Medak, Nizamabad and Adilabad. A.S. Malla Reddy, the Vice President of All India Kisan Sabha, in an interview to IANS, pointed out that such rampant migration is indicative of the terrible living conditions in Telangana.

It is found that migration, which has been a common phenomenon in the regions of Marathwada, Bundelkhand and Telangana, has increased significantly. There is more than 20% population migration from affected villages in these regions to nearby cities. A significant number of children and women accompany their families to cities. One of the important observations is that the number of people who go to nearby towns for wage work and come back by late evening after work has increased significantly in the past 3 to 5 years (ActionAid India, 2016).

we see it especially expanding in the last 30 years on account of the factors mentioned above or a combination of those.

### 3. Who is excluded in Agriculture?

Indian economy continues to be largely agriculture-based. Table 1 shows that almost 50 per cent of the rural households in India are dependent on the income from the agriculture sector for their sustenance. Out of these, 35.3 per cent households are earning their livelihood from working in the agricultural fields as self-employed workers and only 15.47 per cent are employed as casual labourers in agriculture. The percentage of households dependent on agriculture varies on account of the degrees of access to resources related to agriculture, i.e., land ownership, landholding size, source of irrigation, credit, extension services, infrastructure, technology, risk coverage, etc. Households

belonging to socially excluded and disadvantaged groups have several challenges in accessing these resources because of the discrimination and exclusion they face on the basis of caste, religion and gender (Thorat, 2009).

Table 1 presents the outcomes of this status hiatus in terms of the eventual outcomes of income and wellbeing. Scheduled Caste households, Muslim households and female-headed households have a larger dependency on underpaid and casualized agriculture and non-agriculture wage employment. Households that are reported as self-employed in agriculture are very few among Dalits (SCs) (19.13%), Muslims (21.7%) and Women (24.1%). On the contrary, Others, Hindus and male-headed households are reported with better earnings from self-employment.

It is often said that, with resources like equitable access to productive means, self-employment is way better than casual employment in certain

<b>Table 1: Major Sources of Income Reported by Different Households in Rural India</b>						
Household characteristics	Self-employed		Casual labour		Salary/regular wage	Others
	Agriculture	Non-agriculture	Agriculture	Non-agriculture		
<b>Social group</b>						
ST	40.45	4.18	15.85	25.98	9.36	4.18
SC	19.13	6.20	26.94	33.21	8.14	6.38
OBC	38.77	10.73	13.03	22.57	8.22	6.68
Others	43.34	9.74	8.01	15.48	13.18	10.25
<b>Religion</b>						
Hindu	37.44	7.85	15.73	22.99	9.17	6.83
Muslim	21.71	16.27	14.99	30.20	8.71	8.10
Christian	29.20	8.72	11.01	18.21	21.62	11.24
Others	26.57	8.12	13.32	28.62	13.13	10.29
<b>Sex of head of household</b>						
Male	37.29	9.37	15.29	24.23	9.03	4.80
Female	24.10	4.96	16.50	21.52	12.30	20.62
All	35.31	8.71	15.47	23.83	9.52	7.17

Source: Compiled from India Human Development Survey, 2011–12.

situations and as has been explained previously, employment in agriculture depends on access to different resources related to agriculture. Land is an important agricultural resource and ownership over agricultural land is an important indicator of economic wellbeing and social condition in rural areas (Rawal, 2008). Hence, access to it is crucial for socially disadvantaged households (Rawal, 2008).

Land ownership patterns in India are very lopsided and biased against socially deprived groups (Rawal, 2014) and even after 60 years of land reforms, this continues to be the reality of the hierarchical socio-economic conditions in our country. ‘...The pattern of land distribution in India, therefore, reflects the existing socio-economic hierarchy. While large landowners invariably belong to the upper castes, the cultivators belong to the middle castes, and the agricultural workers are largely Dalits and Tribals.’ (Ministry of Rural Development, 2013). ‘It is also seen from the field that even after all these interventions the

landlessness or near-landlessness among the poor, especially the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, is considerable and the demand for land is still being unmet. (Department of Land Resources, 2013, p.4). So, the moot question here is how this discrimination and exclusion towards socially deprived groups’ works. Here follows an analysis of how exclusion and discrimination in agriculture operate on the lines of caste, gender and religion. However, while the available literature provides a picture of the caste-based segregated data, the data and literature with respect to the gender and religious dimensions are insufficient. We sourced and analysed the National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) data to understand the exclusion on the basis of caste, religion and gender.

Exclusion on the basis of social group is most commonly practised in India, specifically in rural India, as caste or social group is a social reality here (Hazari & Kumar, 2003). The average size of land holding, livestock and even occupation of a

particular family vary according to the caste of the family (Hazari & Kumar, 2003). On this basis, the most excluded social group is the Scheduled Caste (SC). Scheduled Caste people are on the lowest ladder of caste hierarchy (Thorat, 2009) and they face exclusion most in land and asset holdings (Thorat, 2009; Rawal, 2014). [See table concerning percentage distribution of households and land ownership by caste groups and by states in Appendix 1].

The second most commonly exercised exclusion is on the basis of gender. Indian society is a deeply patriarchal society where it is assumed that men are the breadwinners and women are the dependents (Agrawal, 1994). On the basis of this assumption, women do not have any right over their family land or any hereditary land owned by family. The family lands are typically transferred in the name of the male member of the family like, son or grandson (Agrawal, 2003). The exclusion of women can be seen to be perpetuated through the institution of marriage and the laws that govern ownership of property (Patel, 2006). As a result of occupational mobility, male members of households are migrating away from agriculture which eventually burdens the women in the family with all/most of the agricultural labour; yet neither do they have a socially sanctioned role in the decision making related to agricultural work nor have any right on the land. They are expected to be just working on and only as labourers in their own family fields (Kodoth, 2004). [See table concerning percentage distribution of households and land ownership by sex of head of household and states in Appendix 2].

Just as how social identities are crucial in determining the land holdings of the household (Hazari & Kumar, 2003), the religious identity of a household also plays an important role in defining access to different agriculture-related resources like land. As a result of exclusions on the basis of discrimination against certain religious beliefs, the

Muslim community in India has lagged behind other religious communities. There are not many studies on the land rights of the Muslim community in India. In the following paragraphs we have tried to analyse the nature and extent of exclusion faced by Muslim communities in agriculture with the help of available data sources.

There is one more group of people who face exclusion in agriculture and land holdings and that group is people with disabilities. The subject of the rights of persons with disability over land resources has not been studied. However, we have tried to understand their exclusion with the help of the data accessed from the Socio Economic and Caste Census (SECC) of India, 2011.

In the following sections the exclusion of these social groups in the area of land ownership, land holding sizes, quality of land, land leasing/tenancy and access to loans, etc., has been presented and discussed. Further a brief analysis is also provided on how land reforms failed these marginalized communities in the absence of political commitment.

### **3.1 Status of Land Holdings**

In order to analyse the current pattern of land holdings in India, we have used the Land and Livestock Survey (70<sup>th</sup> round) conducted by the National Sample Survey Organization. NSSO classifies the ownership of land by one household into four categories: owned and possessed, otherwise possessed, leased in, and leased out. To show the disparity in the land ownerships, land categories such as owned and possessed, otherwise possessed and leased out land have all been used so as to show the total land owned by one household. In this analysis any homestead land owned by the household has not been taken into account because NSSO does not provide information on the uses of land, and homestead land has been typically considered as land not used for any productive

work (Anand, 2016). It is clear from Table 2 that land distribution in India is highly unequal and 41.86 per cent of rural households do not own any productive land (productive land including all types of land, except homestead land) and about 7.94 per cent of households do not even have their own homestead land (NSSO report, 2014).

Table 2 also presents a picture of the existing land ownership of different social groups in India. Over half of the Dalits, Muslims and women (who head households) in India have no agricultural land whatsoever. Data shows that landlessness is high among Dalits (57.3%), Muslims (52.6%) and women-headed (56.8%) households, castigating them to work as agricultural labourers to face the spectre of depressed and unequal wages. Among tribal communities, land ownership remains better protected because of laws and policies in place. Hence, the issues they face are mostly on account of dispossession, as a result of land acquisitions for various development projects. Tribals constitute

almost 40 per cent of the total number of people displaced in India due to development activities (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2014).

One can discern from the table a noteworthy fact that even the extent of land under the ownership of Dalits, Muslims and women is much less than that of the others. Out of the total households in the rural area, for instance, 20.2 per cent of Dalit households own only 8.95 per cent of the total productive land, while on the other side 23.2 per cent of Others' households own 32.24 per cent of the total productive land. Same is the case with Muslims and women (Table 2). Almost 52 per cent of Muslim households are landless, and 11 per cent Muslim households own only 5.37 per cent land. Households belonging to other religious minority groups own almost an equal or larger share of land than their share in total households.

Women, too, face a high degree of discrimination in rural areas. India's agrarian transition has been slow, uneven and highly gendered. There are

<b>Table 2: Percentage Distribution of Households, all across India, on the Basis of Different Household Characteristics.</b>			
<b>Household Characteristics</b>	<b>Percentage share in total households</b>	<b>Percentage share in land</b>	<b>Percentage of landless households</b>
<b>Social group</b>			
Tribes	11.90	13.06	33.80
Dalits	20.20	8.95	57.30
OBC	44.70	45.74	41.04
Others	23.20	32.24	34.16
<b>Religion</b>			
Hindu	84.58	88.92	40.46
Muslims	11.06	5.37	52.60
Christians	2.21	2.18	35.65
Others	2.16	3.53	47.89
<b>Sex of head of household</b>			
Male	86.40	92.99	39.51
Female	13.60	7.01	56.80
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>41.86</b>

Source: Compiled from Land and livestock survey, NSSO, 2013.



also gender inequalities in the intra-household allocation of resources, and a notable potential for production inefficiencies because of the unequal land distribution between men and women (Agrawal, 2003). According to the Census 2011, land ownership is skewed between men and women, who comprise 48 per cent of the rural population. Only 13.6 percent households have women as head of households, and they report an ownership of 7.17 per cent of the total productive land. Even where they report ownership of productive land there is the question of who actually controls the use of such productive land. While statistical data is not available, what has been observed through several micro-studies, is the tendency of male family members (brother, son, father and others) to actually control the land that officially belongs to the women in the family, particularly in the case of single women.

The composition of land distribution is very unequal and diverse if we analyse the distribution of land according to the size of the land holding.

Almost 94 per cent of the rural households are either landless or marginal or small farmers (table 3) and even among them Dalits, Muslims and women are marginalized in terms of the size of landholdings too.

Today the average rural Indian household, as per the new official data, is a marginal landowner, growing mainly cereals on a small patch of land and reliant on groundwater for irrigation. Also 84.87 per cent of the total holdings belong to marginal farmers who own less than one hectare (10,000 square metres), and just 7 per cent own more than two hectares as per the data on household land ownership from NSSO, 2014.

It is clear from Table 3 that while more than 84 per cent of Dalits and Muslims have marginal landholdings, among women this percentage is 80. Only 2.08 per cent Dalit households own more than 2 hectares of land, while 10.26 per cent households of Others have more than 2 hectares of land. As one moves towards land holdings

<b>Table 3: Percentage Distribution of Different Households, across India, according to the Size of the Land Holding and the Class of Ownership</b>						
Household Characteristics	Landless	Marginal	Small	Small-medium	Medium	Large
<b>Social group</b>						
Tribes	33.8	46.06	13.72	5.18	1.21	0.03
Dalits	57.32	35.98	4.62	1.58	0.47	0.03
OBCs	41.05	42.18	9.74	4.95	1.86	0.22
Others	34.16	44.4	11.18	6.57	3.16	0.53
<b>Religion</b>						
Hindu	40.47	42.29	10.08	4.95	1.96	0.24
Muslim	52.6	40.66	4.4	1.85	0.45	0.03
Christian	35.65	46.02	12.47	5.29	0.51	0.06
Others	47.89	28.92	10.62	7.7	3.66	1.21
<b>Sex of Head of Household</b>						
Male	39.52	42.99	10.13	5.13	1.98	0.26
Female	56.8	35.01	5.65	1.79	0.67	0.09
Total	41.87	41.91	9.52	4.68	1.8	0.23

Source: Compiled from Land and livestock survey, NSSO, 2013.

of a higher size, the percentage share of Dalit, Muslim and Female-headed households can be seen decreasing drastically in comparison to their other counterparts. Among the large land holders who have more than 10 hectares of land, 95 per cent households belong to OBC or Other category households and only 3 per cent belongs to the Scheduled Castes (Anand, 2016). Tribal people are over-represented among the landless, Scheduled Castes among marginal land-owners, and 'upper' castes among medium and large landholders.

From the above analysis, it is clear that with reference to land ownership too these households (Dalit, Muslim and Female-headed household) are the most deprived households in the rural economy, who do not have equal access to land. Their share in land ownership is meagre and the size of the land holdings, in their possession, is also very small. The 'growth' years, that saw drastic cuts in the budgetary allocation for agriculture, were also accompanied by a steady decline in the size of the average land holding. In 1992, the average rural household was a small landholder with over one hectare of land in comparison to a marginal land-holder as of 2013 with 0.59 hectares of land. Across the country, in every state, land holdings have decreased in size, bringing the size down to almost half in the last 20 years.

The extent of marginalization of Dalit families is the most striking in a majority of states. There are many states in India where the situation of Dalit households is deplorable. Even when they constitute a considerable share of total households, their share in land is negligible. For instance, in Punjab (39.8% Dalit households own 2.6% of land), Haryana (17.5% own less than 1% land), Delhi (41.6% own 7.4% land), Himachal Pradesh (28.6% own 15.6% land), Uttaranchal (21.1% own 11.5% land), Rajasthan (25% own 12.8% land), Uttar Pradesh (24.6% own 10.4% land), Bihar (16.4% own 3% land), West Bengal (31.4% own 18.2% land),

Madhya Pradesh (18.3% own 7% land), Andhra Pradesh (21.8% own 7.6% land), Karnataka (23.9% own 11.8% land), Kerala (13.5% own 2.2% land), and Tamil Nadu (27.3% own 14% land) (Appendix 1). There is not a single state where Dalit households own an equal share in total land holding and in total households. However, just the opposite is the situation with the category of households belonging to Others, as their share in total land is higher than their share in total households in almost every state. Also, the average size of land for SC households is less than the non-SC/ST households in every state (Anand, 2014), and this difference in the size of land holdings is not accidental but a fundamental construct of the caste system prevalent in Indian society (Hazari & Kumar, 2003).

The situation of women-headed households is also not much different. In Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Lakshadweep and Daman & Diu, there is a huge difference between the percentage of female-headed households in the total households and their share in the total land (Appendix 2). However, on the contrary, in some North-Eastern states, Chandigarh, Chhattisgarh and Puducherry, female-headed households are in a better situation, thus masking the overall trend to make it seem more respectable (Appendix 2). Though Dalit households eventually got some control over land in the form of a share in government land, surplus land or common land, as a result of land reforms (Omvedt, 1996), it was always only the adult male or son of the family who was considered a unit for separate landholdings. Neither adult females nor married and unmarried daughters were ever considered a unit for land distribution, even during the period of land reforms, except in Kerala (Agarwal, 2003). So, ultimately, there has been no fundamental change in the situation of women not being owners of the land, even after the initiation of land reforms.

### 3.2 Quality of the Land of Excluded Groups

Coupled with the question of ownership is the question of the quality of land which reflects in its irrigation status. While data on quality of land of excluded communities as compared to those higher up in the caste hierarchy is not available, studies indicate that Dalits mostly possess degraded land both due to them being historically forced to settle in wastelands or low quality lands, or having been handed over degraded land as a result of the limited redistribution efforts carried out over the past seven decades (Mohanty, 2001). The quality of land under the cultivation of Dalits is also very poor with limited irrigational possibilities. 58 per cent of the land they possess has no irrigation facility. With regard to irrigation, the situation in tribal India and indeed the overall situation of all excluded groups seems better. However, this needs a deeper analysis to examine who has the best lands in India. For instance, when we analyse the situation of Dalit land ownership in the most fertile agrarian belt of India, the Gangetic belt, which has been at the centre of public investments in agriculture (irrigation, modernization, extension, research, inputs and infrastructure), we see that the condition of Dalits and indeed of Muslims and women is extremely tenuous {e.g., Punjab (39.8% Dalit households own 2.6% of land), Haryana (17.5% own less than 1% land), Bihar (16.4% own 3% land)}.

### 3.3 Unfinished Land Reforms and Exclusion

Land Reform efforts over the last decades have also not been in favour of Dalit communities or of women and Muslims. While data with reference to the latter two is not available, the fact that even limited land reform efforts are bypassing Dalit communities, like the redistribution of ‘ceiling surplus land’ as of 2013, bears testimony to the discrimination against Dalits in land reform measures. With reference to women, it can be said that the very idea of women as

owners of agricultural land or indeed of women as farmers is at best a nascent one, with little in terms of policies to support this advance and therefore it constitutes an important agenda and demand of women’s rights struggles across India.

Social group	Share in total beneficiaries	Share in total redistributed land
ST	38.73	37.38
SC	15.08	15.38
Others	46.19	47.24

Source: Author’s calculation based on data available on [www.indiastat.com](http://www.indiastat.com)

Many studies reviewing the impact of land reforms on Scheduled castes and tribes found that the percentage of land redistributed in India is limited and the land which was to be redistributed remained mostly a promise on paper with no real efforts towards its implementation. ‘...inherent loopholes and ambiguities in the legislative measures, slow proceedings at all levels of bureaucracy, lack of updated land records, the ignorance and illiteracy of scheduled population, and the escaping attitude of the larger landowners are the major reasons that hindered fair distribution of land by allowing the bulk of land owners to avoid expropriation’ (Mohanty, 2001, p. 3862). As a result of both the lack of commitment on the part of the bureaucracy to implement land reforms and the nefarious designs of the big landlords to prevent the poor from accessing and cultivating lands, the land reforms failed. The cultivable wastelands are often actually cultivated by large, upper-caste landowners, and the proposed allotments to scheduled caste and scheduled tribe (SC/ST) landless households often remain on paper, as these allottees are forcefully evicted or at times not even allowed to take possession (Mander, 2013).

Many states had failed to redistribute land to the scheduled groups. ‘...Though the national guideline suggests that 50 per cent of the land to be distributed through land reform measures should be made available to scheduled caste and scheduled tribe beneficiaries, the distribution pattern in states like Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, Punjab, Maharashtra and Kerala reveals a bias in favour of non-scheduled groups. A study of 13 states revealed that even after 50 years of planned initiatives and policy measures, there has not been substantial improvement in the landholding status of scheduled groups, and in some states, it has declined further’ (Mohanty, 2001, p. 3857).

### 3.4 Land leasing and Tenancy

What presents exclusion through another facet, is the question of tenancy and tenants. Tenancy in India is hidden and informal. Only a small percentage of land/households are reported under the leased in category. This is around 9 per cent as per the NSSO data. In reality this figure would be three times or more. ‘...there are other micro studies that point out that the NSS data does not fully capture the incidence of tenancy which varies between 15 to 35 per cent. About 90 per cent of the leased in area is informal and unrecorded. The landless and the marginal farmers constitute the bulk (91 per cent) of those leasing in land’ (MRD Report, 2013, p. 30).

Table 5 shows that this percentage is slightly more among Dalits (10%), when compared with the others. However the median land holding of the leased in land is hardly 0.28 hectares, thus shedding light on the social composition of the tenant farmers. The situation of Muslim households is also the same. The percentage of households reported as lessee households is the same for both Hindu and Muslim communities but the average area of leased in land by Muslim households is just half the area of leased in land by Hindu households. In the case

of female and male-headed households, the pattern is different; here the percentage of female-headed lessee households is less than the male-headed households but the area of leased in land is the same for both types of households (Table 5).

<b>Table 5: Percentage of Different Households Reporting Leased in of any Land (excluding homestead land) and Median Area of Leased in land</b>		
<b>Household Characteristics</b>	<b>Percentage of households reporting leased in of any land (excluding homestead land)</b>	<b>Median area of leased in land (in hectare)</b>
<b>Social group</b>		
ST	6.84	.47
SC	10.08	.28
OBC	8.92	.39
Others	9.26	.50
<b>Religion</b>		
Hindu	9.00	.40
Muslim	9.00	.20
Christian	7.16	.61
Others	10.19	1.21
<b>Sex of head of household</b>		
Male	9.77	.40
Female	3.99	.40
All	8.99	.40

Source: Compiled from Land and livestock survey, NSSO, 2013.

But when we look at the terms of tenancy, we see that they are not very favourable towards tenants in general with share of produce being a predominant mode of lease. This disadvantage is clear in the case of Tribals and Dalits (Table 6).

Among all social groups, around 53 per cent of Scheduled caste households leased in land on the basis of share in produce, which can be assumed to be a result of their adverse bargaining power. Around

Household Characteristics	Terms of tenancy							
	For fixed money	For fixed produce	For share of produce	For service contract	For share of product together with other terms	Under unfructuary mortgage	From relatives under no specified terms	Under other terms
<b>Social group</b>								
ST	16.59	23.39	39.10	0.72	1.07	0.74	14.46	3.93
SC	22.48	13.33	52.90	0.67	1.69	0.02	3.89	5.03
OBC	24.86	24.68	32.85	0.37	3.80	0.63	9.49	3.33
Others	43.78	20.07	24.20	0.16	1.07	0.02	8.52	2.17
<b>Religion</b>								
Hindu	27.06	20.39	37.23	0.49	2.86	0.23	7.81	3.93
Muslim	26.30	31.56	32.74	0.05	0.00	0.06	8.24	1.05
Christian	19.08	1.52	40.11	0.00	0.02	8.73	28.61	1.94
Others	77.29	4.19	1.67	0.00	0.00	0.00	16.44	0.41
<b>Sex of head of household</b>								
Male	28.64	21.86	36.10	0.40	2.48	0.21	6.98	3.32
Female	19.33	5.83	32.83	0.74	1.61	2.61	30.92	6.14
All	28.08	20.89	35.90	0.42	2.42	0.36	8.43	3.49

Source: Compiled from Land and livestock survey, NSSO, 2013.

64 per cent of the others households leased in land on either fixed money or fixed product contracts, which can be the result of their better socio-economic status. While female-headed households are mostly leasing in land, either on share system or from relatives under no specific terms, the male-headed households are leasing in land for fixed rent. However, as mentioned above, it is the tenants who are at the receiving end, as a majority of the tenancy is hidden and without any legal protection. Tenants are deprived of benefits and schemes like loans, crop insurance and subsidies, which are generally accessed by the land owners.

### 3.5 Status of Indebtedness and Loans

Credit access is one of the key factors that facilitate

agriculture. Unfortunately many farmers, especially small and marginal ones, are unable to access the credit from government institutions. In the 1990s, there was a sharp fall in the credit flow to agriculture and above all, the supply of agricultural credit sidelined the small and marginal farmers. After 1990, in terms of formal credit supply, small and marginal farmers were increasingly sidelined. The decline is persistent both in terms of the lending amount as well as number of accounts. In the 2000s, even when direct lending to agriculture increased, it was oriented more towards large agricultural business enterprises rather than marginal and small farmers. Small and marginal farmers are hardly represented in the lending class of more than 2 lakhs. The share of loan accounts held by small and marginal farmers declined in the 1990s and in

the 2000s (Ramakumar, 2007). Previous analysis informs us that most of the marginalized sections are small and marginal farmers.

Around 50 per cent of the rural households are under some kind of debt (Appendix 3). The median value of this debt is around INR 30,000. Among all social group households, the minimum percentage of indebted households is that of Tribal households (28.32 per cent) and they also have a minimum median value of outstanding debt. This is followed by the outstanding loans of Others households and Dalit Households at 46 per cent and 54 per cent respectively.

In the religion wise composition of households, less than 30 per cent of other minority community households have outstanding loans but the median value of outstanding loans is very high for these households. On the other side, 51 per cent of Hindu households and 44 per cent of Muslim households have outstanding loans which have a median value of anywhere between INR 20,000–30,000.

As mentioned above in Table 2, 86.40 per cent of the total households are male-headed households and only 13.60 per cent households have a female head. Among these 86.40 per cent male-headed households, almost 51 per cent households are indebted and among 13.60 per cent female-headed households, almost 41 per cent households are indebted (Appendix 3). There is also a difference in the average amount of outstanding loans in male- and female-headed households. Indebtedness is an indicator for access to credit and the data indicates that the female-headed households have less access to credit as compared to male-headed households. Further, when it comes to the source of this credit, female-headed households also have less access to institutional sources like banks. Although there has been an improvement in the Indian banking services, women have not gained much from these services as they have lower access to these institutional sources (Chavan, 2008).

In rural India the major source of loans is banks, followed by money lenders and relatives. But in the case of Dalits, the major source of loans is moneylenders (27.23%), while Muslims (25%) and women (24.3%) are dependent mostly on relatives for loans. It is evident that Dalits, Muslims and women are relatively deprived of institutional sources of loans from the government, thus taking away from them the possibility of availing institutional credit more generally (Table 7). Socio-economic and caste census tells us that only 3.61 per cent rural households have a Kisan credit card above the value of INR 50,000 (Appendix 4) and less than 2 per cent Dalit and Tribal households have a card worth INR 50,000. This percentage is a little higher for women-headed households. While the access to Kisan credit card is very low for all households, it is still narrower for those households that come under the deprived group.

Small and marginal farmers were affected with declining investment in agriculture. The post 1990 period is also marked as the period of withdrawal of other kinds of institutional support to agriculture. In 1995, India joined the World Trade Organization (WTO), which resulted in the fall of output price and also reduction in subsidy, subsequently resulting in higher cost of inputs. The higher cost of input was not equally compensated by increase in support price by the Indian government. The Minimum Support Price (MSP) administered by the Union Government, in fact, was not available to all farmers, specially small and marginal farmers (Ramakumar, 2013).

#### 4. Consequences of Exclusions

The trends of exclusion from land ownership and agriculture are clearly evidenced in national and state statistics and this also reveals the social groups excluded in and from agriculture. What are the outcomes of such exclusion? In India, the lack of access to land has condemned millions

Table 7: Source of the Biggest Loans Reported by Different Households in Rural India													
Household characteristics	Source of loan												
	Employer	Money lender	Friend	Relative	Bank	NGO	Community Credit Group	Govt. Program	Self-help group	Kisan credit card	PF/LIC	Suppliers/middlemen/builders	Others
Social group													
ST	2.39	19.36	15.21	25.02	23.27	1.59	1.96	0.39	6.40	2.55	4.12	0.45	1.35
SC	2.90	27.23	14.42	21.19	17.96	1.33	2.94	0.81	8.72	0.79	0.00	0.37	1.35
OBC	2.01	23.18	11.31	22.74	29.23	0.52	2.35	0.40	4.34	2.59	14.88	0.14	1.04
Others	1.07	15.12	12.13	18.50	39.84	1.02	3.16	1.12	4.24	2.39	0.19	0.23	1.02
Religion													
Hindu	1.98	22.59	12.34	21.42	28.33	0.85	2.66	0.68	5.52	2.21	10.18	0.22	1.08
Muslim	2.03	20.84	17.41	25.03	22.52	1.29	2.34	0.47	5.35	0.66	0.00	0.26	1.79
Christian	3.43	11.84	2.80	10.90	49.52	2.56	5.49	0.33	11.89	0.15	46.00	0.00	0.76
Others	5.15	16.53	7.21	19.60	36.57	0.79	1.81	0.65	5.19	3.60	0.72	1.20	0.98
Sex of the head of the household													
Male	2.00	21.88	12.64	20.35	29.60	0.96	2.65	0.72	5.43	2.21	9.46	0.25	1.20
Female	2.50	24.29	11.99	29.88	19.02	0.61	2.63	0.26	6.66	1.14	18.45	0.18	0.70
All	2.07	22.18	12.56	21.56	28.26	0.91	2.65	0.66	5.58	2.08	10.16	0.24	1.14

Source: Compiled from India Human Development Survey, 2011-12

into endemic and chronic poverty, seriously limiting possibilities of upward mobility for future generations belonging to such poor households (Ministry of Rural Development, 2013). When data on exclusions in agriculture is superimposed with the data of informal workers in India, it becomes clear that exclusion from land and agriculture eventually forces peasants to seek out the life of a wage earner working either on lands of others in the rural scenario or to take up non-agrarian pursuits. As mentioned above, crisis in agriculture pushed millions of farmers out of agriculture. Census data reveals that in the 10-year period between Census 2001 and Census 2011, there were nearly 9 million fewer cultivators in India. This corresponds to the fact that between 2002–3 and 2012–13, household ownership of land fell by 15 million ha or by 14 per cent (NSSO 2014). Rural-to-urban migration has shown a gradual increase, with its share in total migration rising from 16.5 per cent to 21.1 per cent from 1971 to 2001. These rural migrants form a large chunk of the population referred to as ‘informal sector’. The emergence of these rural origin pockets in urban areas has resulted in a number of slum settlements characterized by inadequate water and sanitation facilities, insufficient housing and increased food insecurity (Das, 2016). However, the Census data do not convey the harshness and pain of the millions trapped in footloose migrations. Migration, one may assume, may be relatively rare among agricultural households, but in fact it is highest among households with marginal landholdings that are unable to provide much income to the family. Over 75 per cent of all migrants come from marginal landowning households. That is to say, while more amongst the landless are prone to migrate, the contribution of marginal landholders to the total migrants is higher. In short, the desperate search for work is driving the poor in many directions without a clear final destination; like the migrants from Odisha who work some weeks in Raipur, a couple of months at brick kilns

in Andhra Pradesh, and then at construction sites in diverse towns in Maharashtra. Their hunger and their contractors drive them to any place that offers employment, however brief, insecure, poorly paid or undignified it is. There are rural migrations to both metros and non-metro urban areas and to towns and smaller cities and there are also rural to rural migrations. Further, there are urban to urban migrations, and even, in smaller measure, urban to rural migrations (Sainath, 2011).

Twenty five years of economic reforms impacted the agriculture sector adversely and has, over the years, resulted in many farmers committing suicide. One after the other, all the central governments aggressively pursued neo-liberal economic policies in the liberalization period which has rendered cultivation unviable for most small and marginal farmers, who are also the socially marginalized (Anand, 2016). As per the National Crime Records Bureau, in the past 20 years, more than 3 lakh farmers committed suicide (1995–2014).

Working on the land of others in the context of a crisis-ridden agrarian situation means mortgaging a future to under-paid seasonal wage work; a space which is home to various forms of oppression. Unregulated with no rights protection, it is a space for perpetuation of the overhang of feudal, caste and patriarchal relations in the form of bondage of various kinds such as contract bondage, wage underpayment, unequal wages or unpaid work without any form of social security.

Since employment is also not readily available in other sectors, and there is a virtual race to the bottom among the army of wage earners, ousted peasantry faces significant and severe competition and several disadvantages in the ‘labour markets’. On the face of it these could be ascribed to the lack of preparation for another future (education, skills, etc), or even reasoned as a continued trajectory of social discrimination (in employment opportunities, wage labour markets, housing, etc).



However, there are several community level and occupation level studies documenting human tragedies in the world of wage earners, as de-peasantized people who continue to scuttle back and forth seasonally between agriculture wage work and wage work in non-agriculture sectors, such as construction. Often this back and forth physical movement, borne out of a necessity to survive, and not fundamentally a desire to thrive, typifies the imagery of India and indeed of the global south- an imagery romanticized as one of moving people and growing country.

The absence of land and irrigation are the major factors pushing poor households to find jobs through short term migration. The rate of temporary migration is found to be 'highest in the case of scheduled tribes and other social groups and also those with very small land holdings among rural areas' (Shah & Kumar, 2011, p. 12). Further, it was also evident that '...those among the poor, who migrate for short duration, barely make a subsistence living in spite of migration'. And this 'flow of short term migration is likely to increase in the short and medium term, given the declining (land) resource base among the ever growing rural population' (Shah & Kumar, 2011, p. 24). As mentioned above, migrants in cities are living under very unhygienic and insecure conditions. Recent reports on the drought refugees highlighted the plight of migrants in cities. 'The drought migrants have no homes in the city and some have made makeshift shelters on construction sites, footpaths and park benches. The villagers have no work and no cash, and many are forced to beg' (Doshi, 2016).

Semi-proletarianization of this nature is the most common form of downward social mobility, staring at the face of over 400 million people in India who constitute the informal sector. Thousands of new entrants are being added to this pool every single day, in a process of what Breman calls 'wage hunting and gathering' (1994).

This is the most drastic consequence of exclusion from land and agriculture; a consequence which cannot only be resolved by bringing to this populace education and skills with a hope of eventual absorption in employment. With the size of the labour reserve we have in India and the rate at which people may see a push-out from agriculture, on account of reasons outlined earlier, and within the limits of the size of economy likely to take shape in the next decade, it looks a difficult proposition to absorb this 'informal' labour reserve into employment of a kind which is protected, secure, and decent, given the kind of employment being generated today and in the foreseeable future. We of course know how this transition was effected in Europe in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries under the historical circumstances then of colonialism and of industrial expansion of a labour intensive variety. However, this would be a historic impossibility and an ecological dead end for a country like India to pursue. In India, employment generation is abysmally low even during the periods of high growth rate. The NSSO data on employment in 2011 shows how from 2004–5 and 2009–10, only 1 million jobs were added per year; in a period when the economy averaged a record 8.43 per cent growth annually. In this period, 55 million people joined the labour force (*Live Mint*, 2016).

Pauperization embedded in the process of proletarianization produces further disastrous consequences for the families involved. Hunger, undernourishment, starvation and its impact on the health and longevity of families, thus excluded, is evident in the continuity of the perpetuation of these perils in their future lives. The Global Hunger Index Report highlighted the plight of farmers facing extreme climatic uncertainties and crop losses resulting in huge debts. It further highlighted the fact that Dalits and Adivasis who are dependent on wage labour and agriculture are disproportionately affected by poverty; this pushed India's Global Hunger Index to the 97<sup>th</sup> rank. Data

on child labour and malnutrition also substantiate the fact that the exclusion of the most marginalized families from resources and agriculture would impact the education and nutritional status of the children belonging to such households. Children of these families, who are also subjected to recurrent seasonal migrations, are not only absent from schools, but in order to augment family incomes find themselves pushed into child labour, repeating a continuity of the system that rests its reproduction on their labour power. As per the 2011 Census, the number of children employed in child labour in the age group of 5–17 years in rural areas is 19.22 million, of which 8.66 million are agriculture labourers.

Extreme forms of societal alienation are visible today as an outcome of continued pauperization and expulsion. The model of development and its rejection by the majorities impacted and pauperized by it, whether we measure it in terms of the rising inequalities or in its more vocal articulation by struggles as the question of the 99 per cent, finds its outcome in popular discontentment—in rejection of the politics and political leaderships of the last thirty years and its temporary acceptance of ideas promoted by the politics of populism, protectionism and chauvinism as a means of securing space, dignity and economic opportunities. This has been the narrative of the last decades, more pronounced since the financial crisis of 2008. What is clear, however, is that such a path only leads to a further deepening of the historically entrenched axis of exclusion, thus, creating newer forms of exclusion.

## 5. Recommendations

The Agrarian Question constitutes the basis of our 'National Question' (Sandeep Chachra, 2010) and therefore invokes a commitment to act. How can the agrarian crisis of India see a resolution? On whose terms and conditions and on what ecological costs can this resolution be achieved? What then is the relation and balance of town and countryside? These

are the issues that require public debate and agenda setting. When a majority of the rural population still survives on agriculture, in the context of limited opportunities in other sectors, a forced transition will have a devastating impact on rural communities. The process of economic transition from agriculture to other sectors/locations took place in a few developed countries under very exceptional circumstances. They had advantages over other countries of the world in terms of land grabs in other parts of the world, access to the rest of the world through colonization, control over resources and markets, etc. Such a transition is not possible in India through expulsion or exclusion of people from agriculture. A vast majority in India is still dependent for their livelihood on agriculture and this situation is likely to continue till they are offered enough choice to shift towards other forms of occupation for a decent livelihood. On the other hand, a revival of agriculture should be prioritized through the restructuring of the rural economy with focus on progressive land reforms in favour of the poor and the marginalized with necessary input support, support prices, extension services, infrastructure and markets, promoting sustainable agriculture practices, diversifying the rural livelihood basket, necessary budget provisions, etc. Assured incomes to the farmers could make farming viable and attractive for future generations.

*Land Redistribution:* Land, which is the basis of survival and livelihood of millions of rural communities, needs to be redistributed. The skewed distribution of land and the subsequent question of its ownership still need attention for a radical restructuring of the rural socio-economic fabric. As pointed out by the Committee on Agrarian Reforms, 'revival of land redistribution agenda, protecting and restoration of alienated land and fair distribution of land strikes directly at the roots of an unequal social order and skewed power relations, and frees the marginalized from

the clutches of perpetual bondage, for want of a sustainable livelihood' (MRD Report, 2013, p.151). The recommendations of the committee in terms of enabling the Dalits, Tribals and women in accessing and enjoying land are quite comprehensive and warrants the attention of the State, which is not impossible if there is enough political will. Land reform measures are mostly scuttled with excuses of not having enough land to distribute. However, this defence has been challenged by various field studies and also by the Committee on Agrarian Reforms by indicating the estimates of the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA) on the availability of about 21 million ha of land for redistribution (MRD Report, 2013, p. 24).

Despite a broad trend of failure in the implementation of land reforms across the country, there are certain states with a proven record of successful implementation of land reforms indicating that a state with political will could succeed in ensuring redistributive justice. From the three relatively successful examples of redistribution in West Bengal, Kerala and Jammu & Kashmir, the only lesson which can be drawn years later is the possibility of implementing land reforms in a democratic set up. Land reform was a major policy initiative in the country in the 1950s and early 1960s. However, after the abolition of *Zamindari* and Proprietary Rights, other measures like ceiling on land holdings, even while becoming a part of the legal framework, did not get implemented in its true spirit except in some states like, West Bengal, Kerala, Jammu & Kashmir and Andhra Pradesh. A brief summary of the successful land reforms implemented by these state governments is provided in Appendix 5.

While land redistribution still remains a primary recommendation, here below are some of the other fields that require simultaneous attention:

- a. Redistributive land reforms agenda should also encompass the newer challenges of the

market oriented liberalization agenda like amendments to the legal provisions for speedy acquisitions of lands ignoring the social and environmental concerns, exemptions to investments on industrial parks/investment zones, coastal corridors, expanding urban horizons, legalizing and liberalizing tenancy, conversion of agricultural lands for non-agriculture purposes—ultimately making land a commodity with speculative value. In this context, the redistributive land reforms agenda needs to be expanded with redistribution of lands, thus, preventing land alienation, challenging land acquisitions and regulating purchasing/contracting/leasing of agricultural land by non-agriculturists. This process of making equitable redistribution of natural resources (land, forest, commons) by ensuring social and ecological justice should become the policy priority of the state.

- b. Further, despite land distribution, many beneficiaries could not access it due to lack of support for accessing land and making it productive. Extending all provisions of credit, insurance and MSP, input support, infrastructure, markets and extension services is a prerequisite for the success of land allocations to the small holder farmers, of whom majority belong to the marginalized sections of Tribals, Dalits and Muslim minorities.
- c. Even after ensuring land rights and input support, it would not guarantee any assured income unless issues of cost of cultivation, pricing and cropping patterns and climate risks are addressed. Hence reducing cultivation costs and diversification of cropping patterns with local and non chemical inputs on the principles of ecological farming is important, which would not only serve the purpose of making farming viable but also address the rising concerns over issues of soil, water and bio-diversity. Further the complexity

of the pricing mechanism has made the demand for farmers' income assurance gain prominence. In this context, it is imperative that a Farmers Income Commission be set up to define income levels that would ensure a decent living standard for farmers. It is also equally essential to establish current household incomes of farmers and outline ways to enhance the income through both farming and non-farm related work.

- d. As the trend moves towards liberating land from market, there are attempts by the state to revise the existing protections to tenants. This would impact the disadvantaged social groups, as they are at the bottom of the income and protection frameworks. Hence there is a need to protect the interests of the tenants and sharecroppers, enabling them to access all farm related credit, subsidies, insurance, crop compensation etc. For instance, in states like Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, there are positive examples of ensuring loans and other benefits to tenants by identifying and registering them by issuing Loan Eligibility Cards. Farmers' organizations are hence demanding that this model be emulated instead of revising the tenancy laws in favour of land owners and markets.
- e. Promoting women's inheritance and control

of land could be one of the priorities, with gender disaggregation in all land related records, appropriate arrangements for effective implementation of the amendment to Hindu Succession Act, recognizing women as farmers and extending all entitlements (loans, input support, extension services), while also encouraging collectives of women for cultivation and creating infrastructure and marketing avenues.

- f. Most importantly, policy and programme frameworks should focus on having the most marginalized sections as their primary beneficiaries. Special policy framework with necessary budgetary allocations, schemes, packages and administrative machinery need to be evolved for enabling SCs, STs, Muslims, Women and other deprived groups to access and enjoy land and other natural resources.

However, it also needs to be noted that semi-proletarianization has never gone without a fight, and a wave of occupy movements or re-peasantization movements, *sui generis*, serve as a modern sovereign project of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (CARES report on The Agrarian Question: Past, Present and Future, 2012, p.8). The commitment of the state cannot materialize in a vacuum without significant political struggles and movements with sufficient mass base.

## Endnotes

- 1 According to Papola (1968), all labour markets are imperfect markets because of the different characteristics of labour and its degree is higher in underdeveloped or developing countries because of socio-economic reasons. These imperfect labour markets exclude labourers on the basis of caste, religion, sex etc and also exclude people who do not own land or any other means of production.
- 2 Percentage of informal labour is increasing in India (except from 1999–2000 to 2004–05 because of the

distress and poverty pushed employment growth) and in this particular increase the percentage of marginalized people is higher (Abraham, 2009).

- 3 A semi-proletariat is a wage labour-force that is not wholly dependent on the wage for economic subsistence. This occurs where wage-workers retain access to land, working it themselves or via members of their family. Many a time they are seasonal workers, who spend part of the year on peasant plots, while in the other part they migrate in search of work.

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**Appendices**  
**Appendix 1: Percentage Distribution of Households and Land Ownership by Caste Groups and by States.**

State	Tribes			Dalits			OBC			Others		
	Percentage share in total households	Percentage share in land ownership (included homestead land)	Percentage share in land ownership (excluded homestead land)	Percentage share in total households	Percentage share in land ownership (included homestead land)	Percentage share in land ownership (excluded homestead land)	Percentage share in total households	Percentage share in land ownership (included homestead land)	Percentage share in land ownership (excluded homestead land)	Percentage share in total households	Percentage share in land ownership (included homestead land)	Percentage share in land ownership (excluded homestead land)
Jammu & Kashmir	12.41	12.96	13.14	10.49	7.41	7.13	12.27	11.05	11.24	64.83	68.58	68.49
Himachal Pradesh	4.98	3.25	3.21	28.65	15.66	15.19	15.97	15.11	14.74	50.40	65.98	66.86
Punjab	0.09	0.03	0.02	39.85	3.55	2.58	18.25	15.14	15.14	41.81	81.29	82.26
Chandigarh	2.31			3.03	0.16		33.06	53.38	53.89	61.60	46.46	46.11
Uttaranchal	5.43	3.55	3.51	21.08	11.95	11.56	11.77	25.36	25.87	61.71	59.14	59.06
Haryana	0.12	0.82	0.83	17.54	1.19	0.96	35.29	16.81	16.42	47.05	81.18	81.79
Delhi	1.05	0.02		41.61	8.26	7.41	31.94	26.33	26.33	25.40	65.39	66.26
Rajasthan	15.11	10.27	10.10	25.06	12.82	12.86	48.39	52.68	52.58	11.45	24.23	24.45
Uttar Pradesh	0.68	0.52	0.51	24.65	10.73	10.44	56.76	54.75	54.71	17.90	34.01	34.34
Bihar	3.73	0.45	0.26	16.36	3.44	2.96	63.88	64.63	64.64	16.03	31.48	32.15
Sikkim	37.33	49.08	49.98	2.78	0.34	0.34	54.20	50.19	49.31	5.69	0.39	0.37
Arunachal Pradesh	78.12	93.64	93.21	0.08						21.80	6.36	6.79
Nagaland	98.93	99.40	99.46	0.45	0.28	0.29	0.37	0.29	0.21	0.25	0.03	0.04
Manipur	46.66	65.12	67.64	4.05	3.34	3.12	38.59	22.84	20.71	10.70	8.71	8.53
Mizoram	92.97	93.80	94.03				7.03	6.20	5.97			
Tripura	35.60	53.64	57.48	18.60	15.14	15.64	15.96	11.97	12.10	29.84	19.25	14.78
Meghalaya	93.51	97.33	97.30				0.03	0.05	0.05	6.46	2.62	2.65
Assam	15.50	21.12	22.59	8.45	6.30	6.44	29.09	26.47	25.40	46.96	46.11	45.57
West Bengal	7.57	7.93	7.82	31.44	19.45	18.23	12.80	14.42	14.49	48.20	58.20	59.46
Jharkhand	41.13	62.11	62.95	8.82	5.26	4.86	40.51	21.77	21.10	9.54	10.86	11.09
Orissa	26.82	29.35	29.87	19.23	11.44	11.18	37.52	40.36	40.37	16.42	18.85	18.58
Chhattisgarh	38.31	48.45	48.71	8.92	9.21	9.30	49.62	41.04	40.66	3.15	1.29	1.33
Madhya Pradesh	31.35	20.86	20.75	18.34	7.23	7.16	37.45	47.40	47.47	12.86	24.51	24.61



State	Tribes			Dalits			OBC			Others		
	Percentage share in total households	Percentage share in land ownership (included homestead land)	Percentage share in land ownership (excluded homestead land)	Percentage share in total households	Percentage share in land ownership (included homestead land)	Percentage share in land ownership (excluded homestead land)	Percentage share in total households	Percentage share in land ownership (included homestead land)	Percentage share in land ownership (excluded homestead land)	Percentage share in total households	Percentage share in land ownership (included homestead land)	Percentage share in land ownership (excluded homestead land)
Gujarat	24.66	13.77	13.57	7.75	2.66	2.61	48.94	47.80	47.89	18.64	35.77	35.93
Daman & Diu	4.59	11.83	11.79	0.54	0.09		94.59	84.93	85.20	0.28	3.15	3.00
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	73.99	99.42	99.43							26.01	0.58	0.57
Maharashtra	17.37	9.03	9.01	9.19	5.20	5.16	42.92	43.56	43.58	30.52	42.21	42.25
Andhra Pradesh	6.18	9.22	9.30	21.86	7.98	7.57	39.82	44.92	45.25	32.13	37.87	37.87
Karnataka	5.76	5.54	5.59	23.90	12.18	11.78	48.79	49.91	50.08	21.55	32.37	32.55
Goa	9.74	2.29	0.31	3.42	2.09		4.67	0.34		82.18	95.28	99.69
Lakshadweep	99.91	100.00	100.00	0.09								
Kerala	1.17	0.79	0.81	13.48	4.35	2.17	61.07	45.91	43.90	24.29	48.95	53.12
Tamil Nadu	0.71	1.49	1.46	27.35	14.35	13.93	69.51	79.72	80.06	2.43	4.44	4.55
Puducherry	0.25			20.89	5.63	2.14	59.34	86.62	90.26	19.53	7.75	7.60
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	27.47	32.69	41.01	1.59	2.14		21.67	21.99	13.88	49.28	43.18	45.12
Telangana	9.39	13.72	13.83	27.04	21.06	20.99	56.49	52.96	52.90	7.08	12.26	12.28
All India	11.91	13.13	13.06	20.17	9.16	8.95	44.71	45.52	45.74	23.22	32.18	32.24

Source: Compiled from Land and livestock Survey; NSSO, 2013.

**Appendix 2: Percentage Distribution of Households and Land Ownership by Sex of Head of Household and States**

State	Percentage share in total households	Male		Percentage share in total households	Female	
		Percentage share in land ownership (included homestead land)	Percentage share in land ownership (excluded homestead land)		Percentage share in land ownership (included homestead land)	Percentage share in land ownership (excluded homestead land)
Jammu & Kashmir	91.12	93.85	93.82	8.88	6.15	6.18
Himachal Pradesh	76.8	77.33	77.49	23.2	22.67	22.51
Punjab	86.18	93.89	94	13.82	6.11	6
Chandigarh	87.54	75.71	75.96	12.46	24.29	24.04
Uttaranchal	83.62	90.59	90.79	16.38	9.41	9.21
Haryana	89.89	96.92	97.04	10.11	3.08	2.96
Delhi	87.12	95.64	95.69	12.88	4.36	4.31
Rajasthan	87.11	91.44	91.52	12.89	8.56	8.48
Uttar Pradesh	88.61	94.24	94.34	11.39	5.76	5.66
Bihar	81.18	91.13	91.63	18.82	8.87	8.37
Sikkim	85.18	88.6	88.51	14.82	11.4	11.49
Arunachal Pradesh	93.69	93.08	93.46	6.31	6.92	6.54
Nagaland	97.4	97.32	97.14	2.6	2.68	2.86
Manipur	88.19	85.9	85.45	11.81	14.1	14.55
Mizoram	89.5	92.33	92.32	10.5	7.67	7.68
Tripura	90.84	92.55	92.35	9.16	7.45	7.65
Meghalaya	89.98	87.32	86.84	10.02	12.68	13.16
Assam	89.42	92.98	93.1	10.58	7.02	6.9
West Bengal	88.86	93.55	94.1	11.14	6.45	5.9
Jharkhand	85.16	90.11	90.04	14.84	9.89	9.96
Orissa	89.45	94.58	94.85	10.55	5.42	5.15
Chhattisgarh	93	92.7	92.63	7	7.3	7.37
Madhya Pradesh	93.94	96.7	96.71	6.06	3.3	3.29
Gujarat	91.39	95.43	95.46	8.61	4.57	4.54
Daman & Diu	88.01	95.57	99.82	11.99	4.43	0.18
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	93.67	99.13	99.16	6.33	0.87	0.84

State	Percentage share in total households	Male		Percentage share in total households	Female	
		Percentage share in land ownership (included homestead land)	Percentage share in land ownership (excluded homestead land)		Percentage share in land ownership (included homestead land)	Percentage share in land ownership (excluded homestead land)
Maharashtra	90.07	94.98	95.02	9.93	5.02	4.98
Andhra Pradesh	81.36	92.96	93.05	18.64	7.04	6.95
Karnataka	82.37	85.67	85.63	17.63	14.33	14.37
Goa	55.17	71.3	76.21	44.83	28.7	23.79
Lakshadweep	80.05	86.81	92.48	19.95	13.19	7.52
Kerala	76.39	80.31	82.49	23.61	19.69	17.51
Tamil Nadu	80.24	91.62	91.99	19.76	8.38	8.01
Puducherry	98.3	89.24	85.78	1.7	10.76	14.22
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	79.86	73.74	79.9	20.14	26.26	20.1
Telangana	78.59	91.08	91.23	21.41	8.92	8.77
All India	86.42	92.83	92.99	13.58	7.17	7.01

Source: Compiled from Land and Livestock Survey, NSSO, 2013.

### Appendix 3: Households Reporting Any Outstanding Loan in Rural India, 2011–12

Household Characteristics	Percentage of indebted household	Median value of outstanding debt (in Rs.)
Social Group		
ST	28.32	16000.00
SC	54.18	20000.00
OBC	54.25	30000.00
Others	46.02	
Religion		
Hindu	51.48	30000.00
Muslim	44.67	20000.00
Christian	35.18	70000.00
Others	24.72	
Sex of head of household		
Male	50.90	30000.00
Female	41.31	25000.00
All	49.46	30000.00

Source: Compiled from India Human Development Survey, 2011–12

**Appendix 4: Percentage of Households having Kisan Credit Card with the Credit Limit of Rs. 50,000 or above in Rural India, 2011**

Household Identity	Percentage of Households having Kisan Credit Card
ST	1.64
SC	1.75
Female headed	2.21
household which have one disabled person	4.08
Others	4.40
All	3.61

Source: Socio-economic and Caste Census, 2011.

**Appendix 5: Some examples of Successful Implementation of Land Reforms**

Andhra Pradesh is the first State in the country to distribute the largest extent of land to the landless poor in the recent years. The State Government began land distribution to the landless poor from 1955 onwards and achieved a figure of 39.25 lakh acres till 2004. From 2004–2013, Andhra Pradesh registered disbursement of a total of 7,75,451 acres to 5,49,934 beneficiaries. Other than Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Jammu & Kashmir and Kerala have implemented the land reforms successfully and these states are the best example for other states in this policy.

**Box 2: Land reforms in West Bengal**

Whilst land reform has made little progress in most of India, West Bengal has achieved notable progress in land reform. Two major land reform Acts were passed in the state in the 1950s: the Estate Acquisition Act of 1953 (EAA) and the Land Reforms Act (LRA) of 1955. EAA aimed to eliminate the interests of intermediaries (*zamindars* and *jotedars*) on all land except that which they 'self-cultivated' (using hired agricultural labourers). Abolition of intermediaries under the EAA was generally successful but was inflicted with numerous loopholes and poor implementation. The LRA was intended to cure the inadequacies of the EAA by limiting landholder's ability to transfer land and by providing greater protections for *bargadars*. However, even with this Act, very little was accomplished. One major land reform which was a breakthrough in the history of West Bengal is *Operation Barga* promulgated by the Left Front government, led by the Communist Party of India–Marxist (CPIM). Under this programme, government recorded the names of *bargadars* in order to provide them with greater tenure security. All registered tenants were provided, by enactment of an effective amendment to the land reform legislation, a permanent and heritable right to cultivate the leased-in land. Operation Barga involved registration of 1.4 million *bargadars*, of which over 30 per cent were Dalits and over 12 per cent were Adivasis. Through Operation Barga, about 1.1 million acres of land was permanently brought under the control of *bargadars* and their right to cultivate this land was secured. As per the annual findings of the World Development Report (2003), West Bengal has been able to step up the crop-production by altering the provisions pertaining to the ownership

of land and ensuring the legal security of the bargadars over the land they till. Previously, the rate of production of crops in the state was 0.4 per cent. But this rate increased to 1.9 per cent and latter to 3.1 per cent within a decade. About 1.39 million acres of land have been acquired by the government (18 per cent of total land acquired in India), of which 1.04 million acres were distributed (20 per cent of total land distributed in India). It should be noted that West Bengal accounts for only around 3.5 per cent of the total arable land in India, so this performance is well above that in any other state.

### **Box 3: Land reforms in Jammu & Kashmir**

Jammu & Kashmir has the unique distinction of introducing the most radical land reforms in India. It was a watershed in the history of Jammu & Kashmir and a measure, the first of its kind in the sub-continent, lauded by different sections of society and people belonging to different walks of life in the country. The very first movement of peasants and landless artisans in Jammu & Kashmir, began in the 1931 under the leadership of Sheikh Abdullah and it culminates in the charter of 1944 named 'The New Kashmir' of which land reforms was an essential part. This movement got support from the exploited peasantry. Immediately after independence in 1948, Sheikh Abdullah came into power and he implemented the land reforms on the basis of resolution of 'The New Kashmir'. The basic principle of this charter was 'abolition of landlordism, land to the tiller and co-operative association of tiller to regulate production and sale of crops and agricultural goods.' There were two major phases for implementation of land reforms. First was between April 1948 to October 1948 in which all *Jagirs* and *Muafis* were abolished and tenants' rights were protected. The second phase was the Big Landed Estate Abolition Act (October 1950) in which the land was transferred to the tillers. This act puts a ceiling limit on the size of land holding (maximum land holding limit was 22.5 acres). In the first year, 40,000 acres of land was transferred to the landless. Sheikh Abdullah also outlawed absentee ownership, increased the tenant's share from 25 per cent to 75 per cent of the crop.

The land reform greatly helped the marginalized sections, especially the Schedule Castes to become land owners. According to research done by Dr. Ashish Saxena in Jammu, during 1950s–70s out of the total surplus land of 672 kanals mainly taken away from Rajputs, and Mahajans, 70.24 per cent was allotted to SC tenants. A radical intergenerational shift in the occupation pattern of the SCs in terms of landless agricultural labourers to land owning peasants (47.1 per cent) has taken place in the region. Land reforms in the early years of independence laid a decentralized governance in the state.

In 1963, a land commission was formed to find out the discrepancies in the land tenure system. And on the basis of the recommendations of this commission, a new J&K Agrarian Reform Act, 1972 was made which later was amended into J&K Agrarian Reform Act, 1976. In this act, ceiling limit of land holding was reduced from 22.5 acres to 8–12.5 acres depending on quality and type of land. On 9 February 2007, the Jammu & Kashmir assembly passed the Roshni Bill which aimed to provide ownership of 16.6 lakh kanals to farmers. The ownership of Government land which was under farmers' cultivation was given to them at 10 per cent of the rate prevailing in their respective areas.

**Box 4: Land reforms in Kerala**

Land reform is a must for equity in land distribution in rural India. Kerala is a state, which has a reputation as a model state for other Indian states for efficient implementation of land reforms. In March 1957, the first ministry of undivided communist party started the implementation of land reforms by an ordinance, later known as The Kerala Stay of Eviction Proceedings Act of 1957. This act was the basis for Kerala Agrarian Relations Bill (KARB) which was passed in June 1959. The communist party did not implement KARB successfully and the ministry was dismissed due to this unsuccessful implementation of KARB. The next ministry came into existence in February, 1960 and was a Congress dominated Congress- PSP coalition. This ministry came with a new act known as Kerala Land Reforms Act, 1964. This ministry also could not implement the act and was dismissed due to some internal squabbles among the partners. After the early dismissal of these two ministries and unsuccessful implementations of land reform acts under their regime, the third ministry of a CPI(M) led seven party coalition brought an ordinance known as Kerala Stay of eviction Proceedings Act of 1967. This was followed by a drastic amendment in Kerala Land Reform Act of 1964, which was passed in October 1969 and became an Act in December 1969. This amended Act was named Kerala Land Reform (Amendment) Act of 1969 and it was brought into force on 1 January, 1970. This act has three major schemes. The first scheme was about abolition of landlordism, tenancy and intermediary rights of land. This scheme was to grant the ownership of the land to the cultivating tenants. The second scheme was related to providing the land to *Kudikidappukar* tenants (Kudikidappukar was the tenant who was landless with no homestead land and was living on the land of their land owners). The third scheme was about taking possession of the surplus land and redistributing this land among landless or land poor peasants and labourers. The ceiling limit under this scheme was standard 5–15 acres according to the size of the family. According to the Kerala Land Board, on February 28, 1981 the first two schemes were implemented successfully but the third scheme was not implemented effectively. After the implementation of the first scheme average area received by every tenant household was 1.60 acres and estimated average area allotted to per Kudikidappukar household was 0.08 acres. On the basis of many case studies it can be concluded that the first scheme successfully emancipated the tenants from their socio-economic subservience to the landlord class and snapped the centuries old feudal strings or the nexus between the two major agrarian classes. The land reforms in Kerala have been criticized on the basis of very unequal and very little land area allotment to beneficiaries.