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EFFECTS OF TENANCY ABOLITION ON THE HOLDINGS OF FARMERS : A CASE STUDY IN WESTERN MAHARASHTRA*

INTRODUCTION

The Amendment ("Land to the Tiller") to the Bombay Tenancy and Agricultural Lands Act made in 1955 and its enforcement from 1st August, 1956 and subsequently its implementation from 1st April, 1957, made a lot of changes in the sphere of tenancy cultivation. The main objective of this Amendment was to abolish tenancy cultivation and to bring about owner cultivation. On and with effect from 1st April, 1957, every tenant, whether permanent, protected or otherwise, was deemed to have purchased from the landlord, the land held by him as a tenant, subject to the condition that he cultivated the land personally and his total holding did not exceed the ceiling limit (Section 32 of the Amendment). The Tillers' Day appointed to be on 1st April, 1957, formed the watershed between the pre-and post-Amendment situation. The owners were given the option to reclaim the land for self-cultivation prior to the Tillers' Day and the tenants were also given the option to voluntarily surrender the land to the owners. After a long lapse of a period of twelve years of the implementation of this Amendment, *i.e.*, in the year 1969-70, it was felt essential to assess the effects of this latest agricultural reform on the holding structure of the farmers involved in tenancy cultivation.

THE CASE STUDY

The Village and the Extent of Tenancy

With the above objective in view, an attempt was made to study a single village from Western Maharashtra in its entirety and to get all relevant details regarding tenancy cases for that village. In view of this, one village, namely, Kalas from Indapur block of Poona district was selected for the study. There were 222 tenancy cases as on the Tillers' Day involving 124 tenants and 168 landlords in the village of 500 *Khatedars* in the year 1956-57. As there were

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16 *Khatedars* common to both lists, *i.e.*, of tenants and landlords, only 276 *Khatedars* were involved in tenancy arrangements either as owners or as tenants. Not all their land was of course involved in tenancy cultivation. Before the Tillers' Day, these 276 farmers owned 6,531.05 acres of land which constituted 53.63 per cent of the total area under cultivation in the village. The total area involved in tenancy operations in the village was 2,676.75 acres of land which formed 21.98 per cent of the total cultivated land in the village or 63.74 per cent of the total area owned by the 168 landlords in the village who had leased out any land for cultivation.

The Data and the Analysis

The study is based on information collected by examining the revenue records as well as by interrogating the tenant farmers by survey method, during the year 1969-70. The information obtained from tenant farmers regarding the leased in land, owned land, cultivation practices and their relations with owners, became useful for checking the information obtained from revenue records. The data in respect of each and every tenancy case in the village were obtained from the above two sources and analysed.

In this study, the information for the year 1956-57 from the village records is considered as the relevant data prior to the Tillers' Day. After April 1st, 1957, it took quite some time, a few years in fact, before the revenue agency had decided finally on each tenancy case. On the basis of information obtained from revenue records, the structure of land holding of each affected household in the village after the implementation of the Amendment was worked out by taking the revenue authorities' decisions in conjunction with the pre-Tillers' Day position. The post-implementation situation in regard to land holding of each person does not relate to any particular year, but shows the position that emerged entirely because of the Amendment.¹ For the purpose of analysis, all the farmers involved in tenancy arrangements in the village were grouped into different size-groups of owned and cultivated holdings. This became useful to explain the effects of tenancy legislation on the holdings, size-groupwise, after the implementation of the Amendment. The findings of the study are summarised below.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

(a) Changes in the Owned Holdings of Farmers

The size-groupwise distribution of owned as well as cultivated holdings in the village has naturally undergone changes. The information in respect

1. The factors such as transfers, gifts, mortgages, etc., affecting the holding structure of the farmers at any time have nothing to do with the present study as the holding position for the post-Amendment period as stated above was obtained by making changes in the holding size of pre-Amendment situation as per the final decisions of revenue agency on each and every tenancy case in the village. This was quite essential for studying the effects of the Amendment on the holdings of the farmers involved in tenancy cultivation.

of the changes in the owned holdings after the implementation of the Amendment is presented in Table I. This table gives a broad picture of the size-groupwise owned holdings in respect of 276 cultivators before and after the implementation of the Amendment.

TABLE I—DISTRIBUTION OF FARMERS INVOLVED IN TENANCY CASES ACCORDING TO SIZE-GROUPS OF OWNED HOLDINGS BEFORE AND AFTER TILLERS' DAY AMENDMENT IN A VILLAGE

Size of owned holdings (acres)	Position before the Amendment				Position after the Amendment			
	Farmers		Owned area		Farmers		Owned area	
	No.	Per cent	Acres	Per cent	No.	Per cent	Acres	Per cent
Nil ..	16	5.80	—	—	28	10.15	—	—
Below 5 ..	31	11.24	77.37	1.18	30	10.88	79.47	1.22
5-10 ..	42	15.21	327.68	5.02	40	14.50	311.95	4.83
10-20 ..	77	27.90	1,154.20	17.68	75	27.17	1,128.25	17.45
20-40 ..	67	24.28	1,871.35	28.65	54	19.56	1,559.39	24.12
40-60 ..	23	8.33	1,159.90	17.76	28	10.15	1,339.78	20.71
60-80 ..	12	4.34	820.80	12.56	11	3.97	784.73	12.14
80 and above	8	2.90	1,119.75	17.15	10	3.62	1,263.60	19.53
Total ..	276	100.00	6,531.05	100.00	276	100.00	6,467.17	100.00

It is noted from the table that the total owned area of the farmers has decreased from 6,531.05 to 6,467.17 acres after the Amendment. This was due to the fact that eight tenancy cases, involving 63.88 acres of land were taken to the collector's pool. On an examination of data, it appears that about 40.22 and 20.08 acres of land were pooled from the landlords coming under 10-20 and 20-40 size-groups of owned holdings respectively. And the tenants who had leased in about 48.55 acres of the pooled land were in the smaller size-groups of owned holdings, *i.e.*, below 20.0 acres. It is rather difficult now to explain how this land had been pooled since both the parties, especially the tenants had owned holdings less than the ceiling area specified under the Amendment.

It is also seen from the table that a substantial change has taken place after the Amendment in the category of landless and in the size-group of 20-40 acres. In the pre-Amendment period, there were sixteen landless tenants in the village. However, the number of landless farmers increased to 28 in the post-Amendment period. Out of these 28, as many as fourteen were from the landlords' category and they had lost their leased out land to the tenants. Seven out of them were from the neighbouring villages and had sold all the owned land in the village. On enquiry, it was known that they owned some

land in their villages. The other seven landlords were the residents of the village studied. Two of them got the share in their family holdings while five became completely landless and four of them had no sons. These five landlords did not have any owned or leased in land in other villages. Thus, five out of fourteen landlords became genuinely landless, as they had lands in the neighbouring villages or they were the members of joint families sharing in the joint family holdings after the Amendment. The remaining fourteen were the landless tenants and had no land of their own at the time of the survey. Of these fourteen tenants, nine had lost their leased in land to the landlords, while five were continued as tenants because they were cultivating the lands of widows, minors, etc. This, of course, does not mean that all the above nine tenants were left without any land for cultivation as it was found that three of them had their owned holdings in the neighbouring villages. These three tenants after surrendering the lands in dispute to the owners started cultivation of their owned lands in their villages. Two of them had holdings over 55 acres each while the third tenant had ten acres of holding. The remaining six landless tenants were the residents of the village surveyed who refused to purchase the land as these tenants belonged to joint families and had land owned by their parents or elder brothers. This resulted in ineffective purchase of the land and the land was thus reverted back to the landlords. It is also apparent that two out of sixteen landless tenants got the benefit of the Amendment.

In the size-group of owned holdings of 20-40 acres, there were 67 cultivators owning 1,871.35 acres of land before the Amendment, but after the Amendment the number of cultivators decreased to 54 and the area owned by them declined to 1,559.39 acres. This would indicate that the landlords coming under this class lost more land to the tenants than the other landlords coming under different size-groups of owned holdings. In the rest of the size-groups of owned holdings, no significant change in the number of farmers as well as the area owned by them was noticed. However, little increase in the number of farmers as well as area owned by them was noted in the size-groups of 40-60 and 80 and above acres of owned holdings after the Amendment. This would mean that the tenants in the higher size-groups of owned holdings gained the ownership rights of some leased in land after the Amendment.

(b) *Changes in the Cultivated Holdings of Farmers*

The situation in respect of changes in the cultivated holdings is presented in Table II. It is seen from the table that of the 276 farmers involved in tenancy cases, as many as 110 were non-cultivating owners or absentee landlords, who had leased out all of their owned land to the tenants for cultivation. However, this number was significantly reduced to only 37 after the implementation of the Amendment. This reduction can be attributed to the fact that many of these non-cultivating owners started personal cultiva-

TABLE II—DISTRIBUTION OF FARMERS INVOLVED IN TENANCY CASES ACCORDING TO SIZE-GROUPS OF CULTIVATED HOLDINGS BEFORE AND AFTER TILLERS' DAY AMENDMENT IN A VILLAGE

Size of cultivated holdings (acres)	Position before the Amendment				Position after the Amendment			
	Farmers		Cultivated area		Farmers		Cultivated area	
	No.	Per cent	Acres	Per cent	No.	Per cent	Acres	Per cent
Nil	.. 110	39.86	—	—	37	13.40	—	—
Below 5	.. 17	6.15	39.70	0.60	28	10.15	71.72	1.10
5-10	.. 7	2.53	52.65	0.80	39	14.14	302.23	4.68
10-20	.. 32	11.60	471.90	7.21	69	25.00	1,037.75	16.05
20-40	.. 49	17.77	1,537.70	23.54	52	18.83	1,487.49	23.02
40-60	.. 31	11.22	1,536.85	23.55	29	10.53	1,357.25	20.98
60-80	.. 12	4.35	798.32	12.26	10	3.60	702.20	10.85
80 and above	18	6.52	2,091.93	32.04	12	4.35	1,508.53	23.32
Total	.. 276	100.00	6,531.05	100.00	276	100.00	6,467.17	100.00

tion of their lands only after the Amendment. The figure 37 under the class of 'nil' cultivated land after the Amendment comprised of 23 out of 28 landless farmers for whom the explanation is already given. Out of these 28 farmers, five were still cultivating the leased in land of widows, minors, etc., and came in the category of cultivating farmers. Thus the total number of non-cultivators out of 28 is reduced to 23. Besides this, there were fourteen landlords who owned land but did not cultivate personally as their tenancy is permitted under Section 32 F of the Amendment and thus the number of total non-cultivating farmers was 37 even after the Amendment.²

It is interesting to note that a substantial increase in the number of cultivators as well as the area cultivated by them after the Amendment took place in the smaller size-groups of holdings, *i.e.*, below 20 acres. The number of cultivators belonging to the smaller holdings, *i.e.*, from below 5 acres to 10-20 acres was 56 and they cultivated 564.25 acres of land before the Amendment. However, this number increased to 136 and the area cultivated by them rose to 1,411.70 acres. This would mean that more number of small cultivators began to cultivate their land personally after the Amendment. A slight increase in the number of cultivators with a reduction in the cultivated area to some extent after the Amendment was noted in the size-group of holdings of 20-40

2. Under Section 32 F of the Tillers' Day Amendment, tenancy cultivation is permitted on account of the inability of owners to cultivate the land personally. This, however, is confined to the period till the owners are able to cultivate and claim the land for personal cultivation. At the time of the survey, twelve tenants were continued as tenants under this Section. Of the twelve, five were landless, the information for whom is given above, while seven were part tenants having land of their own.

acres. On the other hand, the number of cultivators as well as the area cultivated by them in bigger size-groups of holdings (above 40 acres) decreased after the Amendment. This indicated that the leased in land with the higher size-groups of cultivated holdings went back to their owners in the smaller size-groups of holdings.

(c) *Land Redistribution in the Village*

When the size-groupwise distribution of farmers according to 'owned holdings' is compared with the distribution according to 'cultivated holdings' similarities are noted in respect of positions after the implementation of the Amendment. When the positions after the Amendment in Tables I and II are compared, very little variations are observed in each of the size-groups. This is, as it should be, in view of the very limited tenanted land, after the Amendment. At the time of the survey, the total tenanted land in the village was only 358.12 acres, *i.e.*, 2.93 per cent of the total cultivated land of the village. One of the objects of tenancy reform was to transfer the ownership rights in land from the non-cultivating owners to the cultivating classes. The analysis of the process of implementation showed that about 27 per cent of the tenants gained the ownership rights for about 19 per cent of the total 'leased in' land in the village, while 65.55 per cent of the 'leased in' land went back to the owners under various reasons such as voluntary surrender of land by tenants, ineffective sale or non-existence of the landlord-tenant relations between two parties on the Tillers' Day. The redistribution of ownership of land in the village as a result of the Amendment involved only 4.10 per cent of the total land under cultivation. This itself indicated that most of the area under tenancy cultivation had been brought under owner cultivation after the Amendment, mostly by reverting the land back to the owners and with the transfer of limited land to the tenants under ownership rights.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

An attempt was made to study the effects of implementation of the Bombay Tenancy and Agricultural Lands Act as amended in 1955 on the holding structure of the farmers involved in tenancy arrangements by way of a case study of a single village in Western Maharashtra. The relevant information was obtained by referring to the revenue records as well as by interrogating the tenant farmers.

The main objective of the Tillers' Day Amendment was to abolish tenancy cultivation by peasant proprietorship and to eliminate absentee landlordism, so that the lands may be utilized intensively for greater agricultural production. It was hypothesized that the implementation of this Amendment might have resulted in bringing about changes in the holding structure of the farmers involved in tenancy cultivation. This was tested by comparing the size-groupwise distribution of owned as well as cultivated holdings prior to and

after the implementation of the Amendment in respect of the 276 farmers involved in tenancy cases. The study throws out following inferences.

1. The most important point observed from the study is that the tenants who lost the leased in land to the owners and the landlords who lost the leased out land to the tenants did not become really landless as indicated in the land records except in a few cases. It was found that they had some lands of their own in other neighbouring villages or with their parents in the joint family.
2. The landlords coming under the owned holding group of 20-40 acres lost more land to the tenants compared to the other landlords under different size-groups of owned holdings.
3. The small cultivators, who were absentee landlords, began to cultivate their land personally after the Amendment. On the other hand, the number of cultivators as well as the area in the bigger size-groups of cultivated holdings decreased after the Amendment.
4. The major objective of the Tillers' Day Amendment of 1955 being to introduce owner cultivation by abolishing tenancy cultivation was achieved to a great extent in the village. However, the redistribution of ownership of land in the village due to the implementation of the Amendment involved only 4.10 per cent of the total land under cultivation.

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