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CHANGES IN THE STRUCTURAL DISTRIBUTION OF  
LAND HOLDINGS—A CASE STUDY

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For the purpose of this study, a village named Palso (BK) in Akola tahsil of Akola district in Maharashtra, located at a distance of about 20 km. from Akola, was purposively selected. While selecting the village, it was tried to ensure from the revenue authorities that all the records of the village are available. The data in respect of the number of *khatedars* (land holders), the area held by them for different years, the sales effected in the village, mutations due to inheritance, gift, etc., for the quinquennial period starting from 1947-48 till 1972-73 were collected from the records available in the tahsil office. The same has been processed and presented in the Appendix.

The village reveals a very startling picture. The population of the village has increased by 38.44 per cent during the last about 30 years, whereas the number of holdings increased by 81 per cent. The increase in the number of holdings has outpaced the increase in population in general during the period. The total number of *khatedars* which was 105 in 1947-48 increased to 190 and the average size of holding which stood at 17.60 acres came down to 9.73 acres only in 1972-73 (see Appendix). The total cultivated land of 1,848.33 acres in the village practically remained unchanged. There has been substantial increase in the number of holders in the size-group of 2.5 to 5 acres, 7.5 to 10 acres and 15 to 20 acres while the number of those holding lands 30 acres and above appears to have gone down.

*Number of Land Holders and Average Size of Holding*

It may be observed that the number of land holders increased from 105 in 1947-48 to 190 in 1972-73. A glance at the Appendix would indicate that there has been a gradual rise in the number of land holders except during 1962-63. A very steep rise in the number of land holders jumping from 122 in 1952-53 to 183 in 1962-63 was observed. It may be noted that the Maharashtra Agricultural Lands (Ceilings on Holdings) Act was passed in the year 1961. The people anticipated the ceilings on holdings due to the act and effected large number of transfers between 1952-53 and 1962-63. An unusually large increase in the number of land holders may be attributed to the act.

The total land area remained almost constant over a period of about 30 years. The increase in the number of land holders resulted in reducing the average size of holding from 17.60 acres in 1947 to 9.73 acres in 1972-73. The increase in the number of land holders and the consequent reduction in

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the size of holding may be attributed partly to the increase in population and partly to the Ceilings on Holdings Act. The structural changes that occurred in different size holdings lead us to infer that the government policy measures such as tenancy legislations, Ceilings on Holdings Act, distribution of surplus lands to landless labourers, conferring proprietary rights on the tenants, etc., had a profound influence, and has not merely been the result of increase in population.

### *Structural Changes*

For the sake of discussion, the different size-groups of holdings have been regrouped into three groups: (1) Small farmers—upto 5 acres, (2) Medium farmers— 5 to 20 acres, and (3) Large farmers—20 acres and above. Their number, area and average size of holding are given in Table I.

TABLE I—CATEGORYWISE NUMBER OF HOLDINGS

Sr. Cate- No. gory	1947-48			1972-73		
	No. of farmers	Area (acres)	Average size of holding (acres)	No. of farmers	Area (acres)	Average size of holding (acres)
1. Small ..	37 (35.23)	109.17 (5.91)	2.93 —	74 (38.94)	236.43 (12.77)	3.19 —
2. Medium ..	44 (31.91)	426.34 (23.06)	9.67 —	93 (49.02)	970.70 (53.42)	10.45 —
3. Large ..	24 (22.86)	1,312.82 (71.03)	54.68 —	23 (12.10)	642.57 (34.81)	27.90 —
Total ..	105	1,848.33	17.60	190	1,849.70	9.73

(Figures in brackets indicate percentages.)

During 1947-48, the small farmers owning land up to 5 acres numbered 37 and accounted for 35.23 per cent of the total land holders. They owned between them only 109.17 acres of land which is only 5.91 per cent of the total land. Their average size of holding was 2.93 acres. In contrast to this, the large farmers numbered 24 and owned 71.03 per cent of the total land. Their average size of holding was 54.68 acres. The medium sized holdings accounted for 31.91 per cent of the total number of holders and owned 23.06 per cent of the total land.

During 1972-73, it may be observed that the small farmers increased both in number as well as in proportion. The number of small farmers and the land held by them registered an increase of over 100 per cent. The average size of holding increased to 3.19 acres. The medium farmers also increased in number from 44 to 93, their percentage in the total having

reached 49.02. The area held by them increased to 970.70 acres or 53.42 per cent of the total area. The average size of holding also registered an increase rising from 9.67 to 10.45 acres in 1972-73.

The large farmers who accounted for only 22.86 per cent of the total land holders and owned 71.03 per cent of the area, though just managed to keep their number (23) approximately, their share in the total land of the village was reduced to 34.81 per cent, and their average size of holding reduced to 27.9 acres.

It is a known fact that it takes considerable time for the entry in the mutation register after any change in the title of the land. It is seen from Table II that the maximum number of mutations due to different reasons was effected in the year 1962-63. It can be inferred that this was mainly to circumvent the provisions of the Ceilings Act of 1961. May be that the transactions

TABLE II—MUTATIONS DUE TO DIFFERENT CAUSES

Cause of mutation	No. of mutations with area affected in different years							
	1952-53		1962-63		1967-68		1972-73	
	No.	Area (acres)	No.	Area (acres)	No.	Area (acres)	No.	Area (acres)
1. Sale of land .. .. .	15	99.33	28	211.32	6	16.37	9	82.01
2. Inheritance .. .. .	9	50.13	18	86.35	6	34.39	8	63.04
3. Gift .. .. .	—	—	1	13.12	—	—	—	—
4. Tenancy Act .. .. .	—	—	3	14.29	—	—	—	—

were effected prior to the implementation of the act. The maximum number of mutations due to inheritance was also seen during this year only. Twenty-eight cases of sales of land involving an area of 211.32 acres were also seen in this year. Thus about 30 per cent of the total land of the village changed hands during this year. This speaks of the tendency of the people to defeat the purpose of the law.

From the above study it can be inferred that (i) the land reform measures enacted since Independence have been instrumental in causing great structural changes even in a ryotwari village. (ii) The average size of holding has gone down to about 60 per cent during the period. (iii) The area held by the cultivators holding land of 30 acres and above has been reduced to about half. (iv) The people have taken steps in advance to circumvent the provisions of the impending legislations.

APPENDIX A

STRUCTURAL CHANGES IN THE SIZE OF HOLDINGS IN PALSO (BK), AKOLA

(area in acres)

Sr. No.	Size-group (acres)	1947-1948			1952-53			1962-63								
		No. of khatedars	Per cent Area	Average size of holding	No. of khatedars	Per cent Area	Average size of holding	No. of khatedars	Per cent Area	Average size of holding						
1.	0-2.50	..	15.23	27.70	1.50	1.73	28	22.96	48.95	2.65	1.75	37	20.22	71.83	3.88	1.94
2.	2.50-5.00	..	20.00	81.00	4.41	3.88	25	20.49	91.20	4.93	3.65	46	25.14	177.25	9.58	3.85
3.	5.00-7.50	..	16.19	108.85	5.89	6.34	16	13.11	103.75	5.61	6.48	24	13.11	158.17	8.55	6.59
4.	7.50-10.00	..	5.71	51.08	2.76	8.51	10	8.20	83.52	4.52	8.35	23	12.57	200.10	10.83	8.70
5.	10.00-15.00	..	18.07	231.13	12.50	12.16	15	12.29	175.28	9.48	11.68	21	11.47	256.62	13.87	12.22
6.	15.00-20.00	..	1.94	35.28	1.91	17.64	3	2.46	56.35	3.05	18.78	12	6.56	210.10	11.36	17.51
7.	20.00-30.00	..	10.48	273.17	14.78	23.83	14	11.47	345.58	18.70	24.38	12	6.56	300.43	16.24	25.04
8.	30.00 and above	..	12.38	1,039.65	56.25	79.97	11	9.02	943.70	51.06	83.79	8	4.37	475.20	25.69	59.40
Total	..	..	105	1,848.33	100.00	17.60	122	100.00	1,848.33	100.00	15.15	183	100.00	1,849.70	100.00	10.10

  

Sr. No.	Size-group (acres)	1967-68			1972-73						
		No. of khatedars	Per cent Area	Average size of holding	No. of khatedars	Per cent Area	Average size of holding				
1.	0-2.50	..	33	17.74	59.85	2.25	13.16	25	48.10	2.7	1.92
2.	2.50-5.00	..	43	23.12	165.30	8.95	25.78	49	188.33	10.17	3.84
3.	5.00-7.50	..	25	13.44	162.37	8.78	10.53	20	126.45	6.82	6.32
4.	7.50-10.00	..	26	13.98	224.58	12.13	16.32	31	263.18	14.22	8.49
5.	10.00-15.00	..	25	13.44	311.98	16.84	15.79	30	369.87	19.97	12.31
6.	15.00-20.00	..	14	7.53	246.07	13.31	6.32	12	211.20	11.41	17.60
7.	20.00-30.00	..	13	6.99	310.48	16.78	7.89	15	369.30	19.95	24.62
8.	30.00 and above	..	7	3.76	369.07	19.96	4.21	8	273.27	14.86	34.16
Total	..	..	186	100.00	1,849.70	100.00	100.00	190	1,849.70	100.00	9.73

Note :—Data for 1957-58 were not available.