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Perspectives of representatives from farmer organizations and NGOs on land reforms in the erstwhile Cannanore district of Kerala

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Abstract

Land reforms in Kerala have been a significant aspect of the state's social and economic transformation. Kerala's land reform was implemented in 1970 and has been among the most progressive in India. The primary objective of these reforms is to address issues of landlessness, tenancy and unequal distribution of land aiming to create a more equitable and just society. The study was conducted in erstwhile Cannanore district of Kerala to identify the perception of representatives from voluntary organizations, NGOs, or any other organization actively involved in rice farming on land reforms. The total sample size was 100. Fifteen statements were finalized for data collection after judges rating and relevancy testing. The mean score of each statement and total mean score was identified. The study revealed that 61 percent of the respondents having high perception on land reforms.

Keywords: Perception of representatives, land reforms, erstwhile Cannanore, Kerala

Introduction

Land is considered as the most valuable and highly dependable fixed asset in all economies and more so in agrarian and developing economies like India where it holds a symbol of both status and sustenance (Thomas and Devi, 2015) [3]. Land reforms have been a national agenda of rural reconstruction since independence. It refers to attempts by the Government to achieve social equality and optimum utilization of land by redistributing the land holdings (Kumar and Harilal, 2014) [1]. The tenure relations that existed in Kerala was largely a caste based *janmi* system. For a long time, it resembled the feudalism in Europe, except for the differences introduced by the caste system.

Kerala land reforms act was implemented in 1st January 1970 and consist of three sets of provisions. The first was to confer the ownership rights on the cultivating tenants of the land leased in by them. Second, the act provided for granting ownership rights to '*kudikidappukar*', (attached labourers to *janmies*) mainly agricultural labourers, over their homesteads. The third scheme was to take possession of surplus lands and redistribute these among landless labourers and land-poor peasants (Scaria, 2010) [2]. The study aims to assess the perception of representatives from voluntary organizations, NGOs or any other organization actively involved in rice farming on land reforms in erstwhile Cannanore district of Kerala.

Materials and Methods

The study was conducted in erstwhile Cannanore district (present Kannur, Kasargod and North Wayanad) of Kerala. Five rice growing tracts (two from Kannur, two from Kasargod and one from North Wayanad) were selected by proportionate random sampling based on maximum area under rice cultivation. Five blocks viz, Kalliasseri and Taliparamba from Kannur district, Kanhangad and Nileswaram from Kasargod district, Panamaram block from North Wayanad were selected for the study. Twenty representatives from farmer organizations, Non-Governmental Organization (NGOs), voluntary organizations or any other organization actively involved in rice farming from each block was selected randomly forming a sample size of 100.

For the development of the procedure 50 statements were enlisted and subjected to judges rating. After judges rating, statements which secured a relevancy index of 80 and above were selected. Reliability was tested and a reliability co-efficient of 0.720 indicated reliability of the selected statements for the measurement. Finally 15 statements were selected for final procedure.

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The perception of representatives on land reforms was obtained on a three point continuum Strongly Agree, agree

and disagree with scores 3, 2, 1. The statements were shown in table 1.

Table 1: Statements regarding perception of representatives from different organisations actively involved in rice farming

	Statement	Strongly Agree (3)	Agree (2)	Disagree (1)
1	Land reforms act helped to enhance the production and productivity of rice in Kerala			
2	Implementation of land reforms results in the concentration of land in the hands of a new class those are disinterested in agriculture.			
3	Land reforms act paved way for improving the socio economic status of tenant farmers and agricultural labourers.			
4	By the implementation of land reforms, there has been an upliftment of rural economy.			
5	The most visible result of land reform was the extreme fragmentation of land.			
6	Exclusion of plantations from the purview of land reforms was utilised by the landlords as a means of protecting their surplus land.			
7	As a result of land reforms, new landlords turned to less labour intensive crops like coconut, rubber etc.			
8	Land reforms act helped to reduce the inequalities in wealth and income.			
9	As a result of land reforms, agricultural workers were migrated to non –agricultural sector mainly in construction areas.			
10	Land reform was a progressive step in dismantling the feudal agrarian relations in Kerala.			
11	Land reforms act helped to transform the lease tenants to independent owners.			
12	Distribution of surplus land among the landless households was not made scientifically and systematically			
13	As a result of land reforms, movement of people from south to northern Kerala practising new cropping pattern leads to commercialisation and diversification of agriculture.			
14	Social disparities in Kerala are largely due to the differential gains made by different social groups from land reforms.			
15	One of the major impact of land reform was the re-emergence of lease land farming			

Results and Discussion

A statement wise analysis was done to identify the most contributing statements to perception of representatives out of 15 statements and it was shown in table 2.

Table 2: Total and mean score of perception of representatives

Statement	Total	Mean	SD	SE
S1	100	2	0.69	0.057
S2	98	1.96	1.00	0.082
S3	140	2.8	0.6	0.049
S4	142	2.84	0.543	0.044
S5	93	1.86	0.98	0.080
S6	61	1.22	0.58	0.047
S7	57	1.14	0.49	0.040
S8	140	2.8	0.6	0.049
S9	63	1.26	0.63	0.051
S10	144	2.88	0.47	0.039
S11	144	2.88	0.47	0.039
S12	74	1.48	0.85	0.070
S13	92	2.12	0.99	0.081
S14	106	1.84	0.99	0.081
S15	98	1.96	1.00	0.082
Total		2.07		

From the table it was clear that the total mean score was 2.07. Six statements out of 15 were having mean value higher than total mean score. The statements were, ‘land reforms act paved way for improving the socio economic status of tenant farmers and agricultural labourers’, ‘by the implementation of land reforms, there has been an upliftment of rural economy’, ‘land reforms act helped to reduce the inequalities in wealth and income’, ‘land reform was a progressive step in dismantling the feudal agrarian relations in Kerala’, ‘land reforms act helped to transform the lease tenants to independent owners’ and as a result of land reforms, movement of people from south to northern Kerala practising new cropping pattern leads to commercialisation and diversification of agriculture.

Frequency and percentage of respondents having high and low perception on impact of land reforms was worked out using mean and standard deviation and it was depicted in table 3.

Table 3: Frequency and percentage of respondents having high and low perception on impact of land reforms

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Low (<31)	39	39
High (>=31)	61	61
Total	100	100
Mean	31	
SD	3.34	

From the table, it was clear that 61 percent of the respondents having high perception on impact of land reforms and 39 percent of them having low perception. Most respondents have expressed the opinion that land reforms have a positive impact on agriculture and the upliftment of rural society.

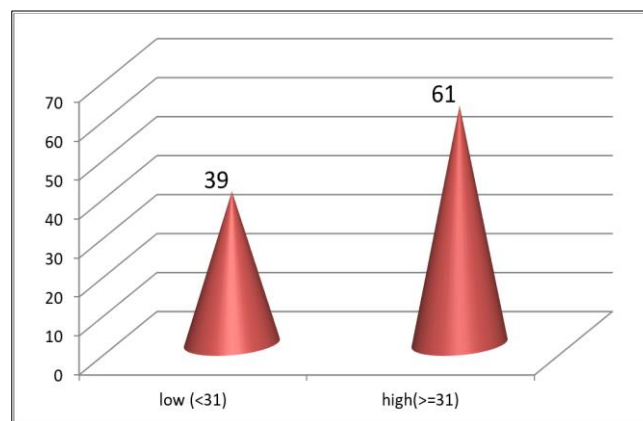


Fig 1: Percentage of respondents having high and low perception on impact of land reforms

Conclusion

Kerala's land reform is the only land reform initiative in South Asia which is the closest approximation of the land to the tiller model. It is well recognised that the land reform resulted in the breakup of feudalistic production relations and reduction in caste inequality. Perception of representatives from different farmer organisations, NGOs or any other voluntary organisation actively involved in rice farming was worked out and the results shows that 60 percent of the respondents having high perception on impact of land reforms in Erstwhile Cannanore district of Kerala.

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