

CBSE Class 12 Sociology

NCERT Solutions

Chapter-4

Change and Development in Rural Society

1. Read the passage given and answer the questions:

The harsh working conditions suffered by labourers in Aghanbigha were an outcome of the combined effect of the economic power of the maliks as a class and their overwhelming power as members of a dominant caste. A significant aspect of the social power of the maliks was their ability to secure the intervention of various arms of the state to advance their interests. Thus, political factors decisively contributed to widening the gulf between the dominant class and the underclass.

(i) Why do you think the maliks were able to use the power of the state to advance their own interests?

(ii) Why did labourers have harsh working conditions?

Ans. (i) (a) The maliks being dominant caste were very powerful politically, economically and socially.

(b) Because of power they were able to use the power of state for their vested interests.

(c) They were successfully able to secure the intervention of various arms of the state for their own benefit.

(ii) The labour have been working under harsh conditions because being dalits, they were not allowed to own land and compelled to work in the lands of dominant caste people as a labourer.

2. What measures do you think the government has taken, or should take, to protect the rights of landless agricultural labourers and migrant workers?

Ans.

- After India became independent, the govt. felt that a major reform in the agrarian structure, and especially in the landholding system and the distribution of land, was necessary if agriculture were to progress.
- From the 1950s to the 1970s, a series of land reform laws were passed – at the national

level as well as in the states – that were intended to bring about these changes.

- The first important legislation was the abolition of the zamindari system, which removed the layer of intermediaries who stood between the cultivators and the state. Of all the land reform laws that were passed, this was probably the most effective, for in most areas it succeeded in taking away the superior rights of the zamindars over the land and weakening their economic and political power.
- Among the other major land reform laws that were introduced were the tenancy abolition and regulation acts. They attempted either to outlaw tenancy altogether or to regulate rents to give some security to the tenants. In most of the states, these laws were never implemented very effectively. In West Bengal and Kerala, there was a radical restructuring of the agrarian structure that gave land rights to the tenants.
- The third major category of land reform laws were the Land Ceiling Acts. These laws imposed an upper limit on the amount of land that can be owned by a particular family. The ceiling varies from region to region, depending on the kind of land, its productivity, and other such factors. Very productive land has a low ceiling while unproductive dry land has a higher ceiling limit.
- According to these acts, the state is supposed to identify and take possession of surplus land (above the ceiling limit) held by each household, and redistribute it to landless families and households in other specified categories, such as SCs and STs. But in most of the states these acts proved to be toothless.

3. There are direct linkages between the situation of agricultural workers and their lack of upward socio-economic mobility. Name some of them.

Ans.

- Most of the marginal farmers and landless belong to lower caste groups. In official classification they belong to the Scheduled Castes or Tribes (SC/STs) or Other Backward Classes (OBCs).
- In many regions of India, the former 'Untouchable' or dalit castes were not allowed to own land and they provided most of the agricultural labour for the dominant landowning groups. This also created a labour force that allowed the landowners to cultivate the land intensively and get higher returns.
- The rough correspondence between caste and class means that typically the upper

and middle castes also had the best access to land and resources, and hence to power and privilege.

- This had important implications for the rural economy and society. In most regions of the country, a 'proprietary caste' group owns most of the resources and can command labour to work for them.
- Until recently, practices such as begar or free labour were prevalent in many parts of northern India. Members of low ranked caste groups had to provide labour for a fixed number of days per year to the village zamindar or landlord.
- Lack of resources, and dependence on the landed class for economic, social, and political support, meant that many of the working poor were tied to landowners in 'hereditary' labour relationships (bonded labour), such as the halpati system in Gujarat (Breman, 1974) and the jeeta system in Karnataka. Although such practices have been abolished legally, they continue to exist in many areas. In a village of northern Bihar, the majority of the landowners are Bhumihars, who are also the dominant caste.

