

Non agricultural
purposes become
such a contentious
issue history essay



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Land and Labour are the two most important Factors of Production. But there is a major difference between the two. The amount of Land is fixed by nature and in no way can we increase that. While in case of Labour we know that it is increasing with our increasing population. Transfer of labour from the agricultural to other sectors is desirable because labour is replaceable and even if they are shifted from agricultural to non-agricultural sector there will never be a deficiency. While it is not so in case of land as land cannot be added or replaced. If a certain chunk of land is acquired for non-agricultural purpose, it is considered as a reduction in agricultural land. In India where the population is growing at a rate of about 8 %, it becomes crucially important to retain agricultural land to atleast retain the present level of production.

Development theories aim at all round development of individuals. It has always been seen that comparatively industrial sector is much more profitable than the agricultural sector. So we generally see a migrating trend from the rural to urban areas in search of new jobs and thus there is a shift from agricultural to non-agricultural sector. Often a shift is seen from farming to industrial jobs, wage labour and other ancillary activities. Their living standards are raised and thus there is an all round development.

Also a shift from agricultural to non-agricultural sector shows less dependence on agriculture. Also disguised unemployment in agricultural sector is very common. Thus surplus labour can be shifted from agricultural to non-agricultural sector without a rise in wages or fall in the agricultural output.

PTO

In the early 1990s, one of the most significant changes in policies has been shift away from land reform to that of the removal of government protection to agricultural land to use it for a variety of industrial and commercial purposes. In such a densely populated country like India land becomes very scarce. We can broadly divide land into two, based on land use – Agricultural Land and Non-Agricultural Land.

LAND

AGRICULTURAL LAND

NON-AGRICULTURAL LAND

METRO-ADJACENT LAND

INFRASTRUCTURAL LAND

LAND FOR MINNING PURPOSE

By Agricultural Land we refer to that land which is suitable for agricultural production, for both crops and livestock. The amount of arable land in India is 159.7 million hectares which is the second largest in the world. About 50% of the workforce in India is engaged in agriculture or related activities. While by Non- Agricultural we mean those land which is required by the non-agricultural sector for industrial, service or government sector as well. The amount of this land is increasing due to rapid industrialisation. This too has three divisions –

Metro-Adjacent Land - It refers to those lands which are lands on the periphery of metropolitan cities, medium-level cities and even smaller towns. It has workforce who are better versed than those of the rural areas and these areas are characterized by infrastructure better than that of the far flung villages.

Infrastructural Land- These are those lands which are required for building roads, dams, highways and electricity projects.

Mining Purposes- Mines have to be located in areas where the source is found and there can be no negotiations in this respect.

Hence non-agricultural land is required for varied purposes. Though India has a huge amount of land, the land required by the non-agricultural sector is pretty high. We now turn our focus in detail on the reasons for such transfers:

Building factories - Many a time many huge industrial houses are seen acquiring land from farmers for setting up new factories. They totally neglect the fact that those lands are a source of livelihood to many people completely dependent on it. To site an example we can note the Tata Nano Controversy in Singur, West Bengal. Tata Motors with the state government had acquired 997 acres of land in Singur in Hooghly District of West Bengal to build up the Nano Industry. But there was immense opposition against setting up this industry because Singur was considered among the most fertile land of Bengal and about 15000 people were dependent on that land for their livelihood. The compensation given was inadequate and the accommodation provided to the displaced people was delayed. After much

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opposition from the peasants, opposition party, other eminent leaders and social activists Tata motors had to finally withdraw. If that land would have been acquired then a huge chunk of the people would have been rendered jobless. Also this is one most fertile areas lying in the Gangetic valley thus the agricultural production would have fallen largely.

For constructing watershed programs- This is another purpose for government acquires land from the people and most of the times illegally. By Watershed regions we mean those land which constitute the drainage divide or we can refer to it as the run-off or catchment area. It is a land area that captures rainfall and conveys the overland flow and runoff to an outlet in the main flow channel. The government in recent times has taken up various such projects to recharge the rivers and streams and also to refill the underground water table. We can take the example of The Kalyanpura Watershed in Bhilwara in Rajasthan. . This catchment area is used for agricultural purposes. It is also used for grazing grounds for cattle. Thus when the land was acquired by the government this caused a fall in the agricultural land.

Extending cities- It has been widely observed that there has been an increasing trend in cities that they are expanding beyond their limits. This is due to the growing migration that happens every year from the villages to the cities. People from rural areas migrate to the cities in search of high paying jobs and a better life. All the metropolitan cities as Mumbai, Kolkata and Delhi have huge rate of migration every year. Thus it seen that these cities are ever expanding. Even there are new multinational projects and new offices being set up in these regions which are gradually devouring the

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agricultural land. As the cities start expanding they devour huge agricultural land located at the outskirts of the city. Thus there is again a shift from agricultural land for non-agricultural purposes.

Mining purposes - This is a natural process and availability of natural resource is completely undisputable. If a mine is available under an agricultural land it cannot be helped and thus it becomes necessary to acquire that land. In a scenario where our natural resources are depleting it becomes necessary to conserve whatever is available. In such case the land for agriculture is decreasing again.

So broadly speaking there are various reasons why there is a rising trend in the shift of agricultural land to use for non-agricultural purposes. In a country like India it has far reaching effects and it has proved to be against its developmental process. We take up some issues to prove that it has been detrimental to our growth:

Employment - India is a predominantly agrarian country. About 50 % of the population in India is engaged directly or indirectly to agriculture. It provides a means of livelihood to many. Thus it also contributes to our national income. Now with decreasing agricultural land there has been a tremendous loss in the livelihood of the people. As the cities and private firms continue encroaching there is a certain portion of the population who are driven to joblessness and poverty. India already has about 456 million (42% of the total population) people living under the poverty line and due to such reasons it is on an increase.

Fall in production - Indian population is growing at the rate of about 8 % every year. In such a situation we need to increase our food grain production tremendously in order to feed the teeming millions. It is very obvious that if there will be a fall in the total land available for agriculture, the total production is bound to fall. In such a case we have to import food grains from other countries and in this way our burden of foreign exchange is increasing. India in a way is moving away from self-sufficiency.

Land as an asset - To the poor villagers land is all they have. It is their source of livelihood, their home and the only asset they possess. Many a time the government or the private company who acquires land provides some kind of compensation. But that is barely nothing and temporary. The villagers consider their lands to be a permanent asset and a source of income. Even if they do not have work they do not consider themselves to be jobless as they have their lands. Land is "something" they can fall back on. All in all, the farmers need to be adequately compensated before they give up their land in a peaceful manner.

Thus land is something with which the whole economy is related with. Agriculture contributes a lot to our national economy. It has a major contribution in our national income measured by the gross domestic product. It provides employment to a huge part of our population. Thus we can prove that shift of agricultural land for non-agricultural uses will ultimately be detrimental for our country and its growth. Mahatma Gandhi believed that land, air, water, sunlight and sky are God's gifts and under no circumstances should these come under the control of any person, business group,

industrial group or any centralised form of power. These belong to the masses and are public resources.
