

Land Rights in India

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This book is the first one to appear in a series published on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla. The papers included were presented at a national seminar on "Right to Land and Its Potential for Social Transformation" held at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, in June 2014. The editor is a Professor at the Centre for Rural Studies, Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration, Mussoorie. The contributors are academicians, bureaucrats, researchers and social activists. There are seventeen well-written chapters divided in five parts along with a 'foreword' by the Director, IAS, and an 'afterword'. The chapters are based on empirical research and are impressively free from clichéd narratives.

The collection begins with a rich introduction by the editor, Varsha Bhagat-Ganguly. She avoids repeating the colonial legacy and makes a very comprehensive summary of the current issues. The first part of the book contains six articles that introduce the readers to the diverse nature of dependence of people on land. For example, dependence may be like the loss of human rights as in the case of landless, or on common properties, that

support almost all segments of the population. Another article discusses the dependence on land lease market, a phenomenon of increasing importance.

Part two contains four articles that revisit land reforms from a social justice perspective. The next part reviews existing policies and laws. This part contains three interesting articles on eminent domain, the 2013 Land Acquisition Act, and community rights in Forest Act. Two articles in part five contain four case studies of different kinds of people's movements. The first one contains case studies of struggle against land acquisition for industrial purpose in three different settings. Admirably, one article is an assessment of the *Bhoodan* movement. The last part is rightly titled "issues and challenges of land governance". It begins with an excellent survey of the issues in the country as a whole. The author describes how the post-Independence evolution of land governance has led to the introduction of the National Land Records Modernization Programme. The next article discusses the problems of prospects of land records modernization programmes. A brief 'afterwords' try to characterize the nature of recent developments on land rights, whether they are people-centric and participatory or are only techno-managerial solutions.

Common impression is that the land reforms programmes have ceased to exist. The present volume shows that it exists but in some different forms. There are new issues, and new efforts to deal with those. The book is a very rich introduction to this new and emerging dimension of land rights in India.