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**WORKING OF BOMBAY TENANCY ACT, 1948  
REPORT OF INVESTIGATION**

**BY**

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## FOREWORD

The following publication represents report of the second project undertaken by the Institute on behalf of the Research Programmes Committee of the Planning Commission. This publication together with the report on the Resurvey of Poona recently published by the Institute should serve to underline the significance of the work initiated by the Research Programmes Committee of the Planning Commission for economic planning and policy in India.

Possibly the most striking impression conveyed by a reading of this report would be that of the many difficulties attendant on planning and carrying out an investigation in India, for assessing effects of any important piece of legislation which attempts a wide measure of agro-economic reform. The difficulties pertain to the planning and conduct of investigations as well as to the interpretation of results. The account given in the present report of the alternative approaches, such as through choosing a sample of plots or of families and the problems met with in either approach bring out the difficulties involved in planning investigation.

In analysing the total data one has inevitably to proceed on the basis of a small number of broad groups or classes. This approach, though unavoidable is beset with dangers. It has been found necessary on many occasions to point out in the present report how, what appeared to be some general characteristic or trend relating to groups in the data may be found on closer examination to have been chiefly the result of a small number of apparently exceptional cases. Specially interesting in this connection is the finding that while in the aggregate no special change in the mode of tenancy during the five-year period studied was observable, an examination of cases of cash and kind tenancies by districts revealed, in particular cases, important and significant variations.

The large variety of conditions against which the data have to be interpreted are brought out in the descriptive account of the pattern of landlord-tenant relations in each district. The account is brief and necessarily ignores the variations within a district. Even so, it emphasizes how information relating to, say, level of rents must be related, for a proper understanding, to other important aspects of the landlord-tenant relations.

Regarding conduct of investigations, some special difficulties were met with in this investigation. This was because it concerned a problem which affected vitally interests of all rural classes and on

which opinions were apt to be strongly held. It is interesting in this connection to observe that there is found in the present report a distinct bias in the data, revealed in the reporting of even such an apparently straightforward item as the area of ownership holding.

The data presented in the report themselves reveal marked regional variations. In cases of data for individual districts especially where the number of cases reported was small it has been possible to isolate or indicate the effects of special circumstances. But where the data concerns fairly numerous groups of cases, even after allowing for changes which are apparent rather than real, the exact significance of many changes is not fully apparent. Take, for example, the conclusion, which appears well established, that whereas in Maharashtra districts above the *Ghats* the Act had little effect, it altered conditions of tenants especially in relation to the level of rents in the *Konkan* districts of Thana and Kolaba. The establishment of the result raises the problem of accounting for the differences. Everything points to the tenant in the *Konkan* being poorer and traditionally being much more subservient to the landlord than in the *Desh* districts of Maharashtra. It might be that in spite of the weaker position of the *Konkan* tenant the Act has been found to have greater effect in the *Konkan* because large numbers of *Konkani* landlords are absentee and habitually reside in towns and cities. On the contrary, it might be that in the *Desh* districts, as shown by the ability of landlords to obtain voluntary surrender of tenancy, the bulk of the landlord class is perhaps formed of the better to-do among the body of peasants themselves. Obviously, however, for a full explanation of these important differences, a study of social, economic and possibly even political circumstances may have to be made.

Publication of this report appears to take place at an opportune moment. The new Act, the provisions of which are briefly commented upon in the present report, is going to be brought into force soon. Lessons of the comparative failure of the old Act should prove of use in the administration of the new Act. In this connection, the view expressed in the light of the present investigation that, effective implementation of the new Act depends, in a large measure, on an early snapping of the connection between landlord and tenant is of special importance. The provisions of the Act do not hinder this and the provision of the necessary financial arrangements should not prove too difficult.

The report deals chiefly with conditions of tenancy; however, it throws considerable light on a number of other problems also. The detailed examination of the types of errors found in the village records should prove illuminating. At each stage of

this investigation it became clear that the availability of records regarding land rights and land use and covering all farmers in the countryside is of great importance for not only a definition of the problem but also for a full appreciation of the results. This is specially brought out in the situation as revealed because of the absence of proper records in the *khoti* villages. The report also throws up a number of interesting and sometimes unexpected facts. It is comforting to be assured that in recent years investment in agriculture on the part of all classes of agriculturists has distinctly increased, though, perhaps, the finding would not appear equally clear and large if full allowance is made for the rise of prices in 1950-51. A somewhat unexpected finding, on the other hand, is the large number of cases where tenants are supposed to have given up land because they were short of family labour. In the general context of considerable underemployment in rural areas this appears to be strange and would require further examination and explanation.

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