

# Land is more than an asset

*L*ands are those assets, not inherited by our ancestors, but borrowed from our children. This is the basis on which Indian farmers serve as custodians to lands striving to nurture them to be handed over to their children in good condition. After our parents the most affectionate thing for anybody in our country, particularly for farmers is land. It is land that produces food, holds rainwater underground, helps vegetation to grow and produce oxygen for the universe to survive. Land is the pride possession of a farmer, and it is his religion, asset and everything. The relationship and the bondage between the farmer and his land is special. Land is known as “Bhoomatha” (Mother-earth) and is considered the most sacred. This is the reason that the farmers cultivated their lands for food, fodder, fiber besides all the raw materials for industries, not by exploitation, but by nurturing its quality (rich in humus), to be handed over to their children and grandchildren.

I have been farming for the last 60 years, buying and improving my lands, even by sacrificing many of my family’s basic needs. I have grown 2000 trees on my 8 acres of land at Sorahunase, East taluk of Bengaluru. I was always living under a threat that the government at any time may acquire this most beautiful land which was nurtured using all my resources. This land is the source of livelihood for myself, my three sons and their 6 children. Fourteen of us have to earn our livelihoods only from this land, as none of us have other sources of income. In my opinion, land should be acquired by the government only to make roads. But it should not



acquire lands to give away to road builders, as a cost of making roads. Even the lands to be acquired for making only roads (not for industries, SEZ) should be offered at existing market prices, taking into consideration of the land condition and its assets like trees on lands. For no other reason the farmers lands are to be acquired. The industrial parks, SEZs, land banks, new towns should come up along the railway tracks and national and state highways.

The union government is introducing a new bill in the winter session for land acquisition act, which has many clauses to grab farmers land by baiting with economic gains, which do not really benefit the farmer. If the country’s 40% population who are small farmers have to be encouraged and if the administration has real intention of providing food security for this country, then family farming system needs to be encouraged and supported. Family farming will result in stopping urban migration, further preventing problems like urban housing, law and order, formation of more slums, creating unhealthy living conditions etc. Again, if small family farming systems are encouraged in the world over, agriculture production will be economical while bringing down the use of expensive machineries and use of fossil fuels, thereby reduce pollution.

Farmers are being evacuated from their lands which are not just mere assets. Farmers have a strong bondage and relationship with those lands. If the government is really interested in the development of the people, let it impose land ceiling act and acquire excess lands owned by politicians, businessmen, industrialists which are lying uncultivated and give them to farmers whose lands have been acquired for laying roads. The land ownership for farmers should be made their fundamental right and should not be acquired, except for road laying, by providing proper compensation based on market rates.

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