

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2025 · 10 marks

Land reforms programmes led to some constitutional amendments. Comment.

FLOW SNAPSHOT — how the answer moves

Intro routes

- R1** land reforms to fix unequal agrarian structure at Independence → grounded in Art 39(b)/39(c) → challenged under fundamental right to property → drove amendments
- R2** agrarian justice needed legal protection → reform laws challenged in court under property right → Constitution amended to shield them

Body flow

First Amendment 1951: Art 31 amended, Art 31A + 31B inserted, Ninth Schedule created, 13 state laws protected → Shankari Prasad upheld it → Kameshwar Singh linked reform to Directive Principles + social justice → Fourth Amendment 1955 elaborated Art 31A → Seventeenth Amendment 1964: acquisition, ceiling, compensation → Seventy-Eighth Amendment 1995: +27 laws to Ninth Schedule → Forty-Fourth Amendment removed property as a fundamental right

Counter-view

landholders' fundamental right to property vs state's Directive Principles and social justice → amendments settled the tension in favour of reform

Conclusion routes

- R1** claim holds → agrarian reform steadily reshaped the Constitution
- R2** property progressively subordinated to social justice → land reform a chief driver of early constitutional change

Land reforms sought to correct the unequal agrarian structure inherited at independence, drawing on Article 39(b) and Article 39(c). It directed that material resources serve the common good and that wealth not concentrate in few hands.

But these reform laws faced challenges under the then fundamental right to property, and this resistance drove a chain of constitutional amendments. The First Amendment Act, 1951 amended Article 31, inserted Articles 31A and 31B and created the Ninth Schedule.

Shankari Prasad vs. Union of India upheld this amendment, while *State of Bihar vs. Kameshwar Singh* linked reform legislation to the Directive Principles and social justice.

The 4th amendment, 1955 elaborated Article 31A; the 17th amendment, 1964 covered acquisition, ceiling and compensation.

The 70th amendment, 1995 added 27 more laws to the schedule.

The 44th amendment removed property as a fundamental right.

The claim therefore holds: agrarian reform steadily reshaped the Constitution, subordinating property to social justice.