



A STUDY ON LAND REVENUE AGRICULTURE IN TAMILNADU 1947 - 1987

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ABSTRACT

Land Revenue is the back bone of a government. Different land revenue administration prevailed in the Madras Presidency during the native governments. Land Revenue system was at the hands of petty officials and middlemen. The Britishers who introduced the system of land revenue settlement, linking the assessment to the productivity of land commuted at the average market rates which were unchangeable during a spell of 50 years. An era started to bring prosperity to the agriculturist. The National Government took more progressive views and put a stop to the periodical resettlement from the year 1937 onwards. Land Revenue Administration has undergone progressive changes in different countries or different parts of a country, from time to time creating various types of tenures in land holdings thus deviating from the Ryotwari tenure. Time has proved that the Ryotwari tenure is the only ideal tenure both for the state and for the land holders as intermediary tenures that were created from time to time have only helped middlemen to prosper at the cost of the agricultural economy. This research work deals, succinctly with various types of tenures and the steps taken over the years to all intermediaries and confer ryotwari rights on the occupancy ryots or land holders who had resorted to pannai cultivation. The period 1947-1967 marks a significant stage in the general as well as in the revenue administration of the Madras State. This period witnessed the gradual constitutional, political administration and revenue reforms and changes in the state. This period may be called as a new era in the revenue administration of the Madras State because the welfare and well-being of the people was the key-note of the administrators.

INTRODUCTION

Tamil Nadu has been described as a country almost a nation of its own. Although primarily defined in cultural terms as the land of the Tamil speaking people the geographical location of Tamil Nadu is in the South-eastern corner of the Indian Sub-continent which has enabled it to develop and maintain a distinctive character.

It had national boundaries. It is bounded on the South by the Indian ocean, on the west, by the

Arabian sea, on the east by Bay of Bengal and on the North by the Mysore plateau. In ancient time, it was divided into number of kingdoms. It was the scene of three old Hindu dynasties of Pandya, Chola and Chera.

From time immemorial the rulers in India were accustomed to take from the cultivators of the soil a certain share of the produce of every cultivated acre. The commencement of the nineteenth century witnessed a splendid transition in the field of revenue assessment and collection in parts of Tamil Nadu.

From the time when the East India company first acquired sovereignty of the territories in India, land revenue constituted the chief part of public resource. The primary object of the East India company was from the beginning, the acquisition of large area of lands. Land revenue was necessary in the early days to fulfill the company's obligation to the proprietors of its stock. In 1771 the revenues from the Diwani did not come up to the company's expectation. So Warren Hastings urged direct assumption of authority and responsibility for collection of revenue. Increase of revenue had acted as a powerful incentive in the case of the successors of Warren Hastings. Thus land revenue had grown with the growth of territorial possessions of the company.

GEOGRAPHICAL FEATURES

The land of India displays great physical variation. The geographical condition of the country exercises a tremendous influence on the course of the country. Geography had a great influence in determining the life style culture and economy of the people of the country.

Geography governs history. The geographical features of a country like coastal lines, mountains, rivers and rainfalls, climate, irrigation and natural resources determine the political social and economic life of the people.

Geographically India can be divided in to four distinct regions.

1. Mighty Mountain ranges in the North
2. The Great Indo -Gangetic plain
3. The Deccan plateau and
4. Coastal Ghats

The Deccan peninsula is a triangular table-land stretches from Vindhya to Cape Comorin. The area lying to the south of Krishna and Thungabhadra is known as far south. The present territories of Mysore and Tamil Nadu constitute this region.

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It had natural boundaries. Tamil Nadu was bounded on the south by the Indian Ocean, on the west by the Arabian Sea, on the east by Bay of Bengal and on the North by the Mysore Plateau. A small Island of Ceylon is situated to the south-east of peninsular India.

Western Ghats and Eastern Ghats

The state has two large mountain systems, the Western and the Eastern Ghats. The chain of mountains in the Western Ghats is continuous except near the Palghat gap which is about 20 miles wide. The Eastern Ghats starts from the state of Orissa and run in a South-western direction until a little beyond the Krishna river where they turn to the south parallel to the coast line to a point opposite to the Pulicat lake. The State thus consists of a narrow stretch of land between Western ghats and the Arabian sea and the strip between the Eastern ghats and the Bay of Bengal elevated to tract lying between the two.



Rivers

Tamil Nadu has a fine river system. Cauvery, Palar, Vaigai, Pennar, Vellar, Tamiraparani are the principal rivers. It flows through a length of 760 kms covering Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. Its main tributaries are Bhavani, Noyyal, Amaravathi and Kollidam. The rivers are non-perennial. In order to store water for irrigation and power generation huge amount of money have been spent on the construction of dams and Irrigation channels. There are two reservoirs on the river, the Kirshnarajasagar near Mysore and the Stanley reservoir in Mettur. All the rivers that flow towards Tamil Nadu originate from the Western Ghats, flow towards Bay of Bengal cutting across the Eastern Ghats.

THE BRITISH IN THE MADRAS PRESIDENCY

The term Madras Presidency was applied to certain areas in South India which passed to the British through historical cause's course of time and its basic formation was completed by the beginning of the 19th century. The establishment of the three presidencies of Madras, Calcutta and Bombay was the natural outcome of the efforts of a foreign naval power to secure footholds on the Indian subcontinent for enlarging its commercial prospects. The Presidency of Madras was formed by the acquisition of territories from the native rulers through conquest and union.

Both War and diplomacy played their parts in its formation.

The East India Company emerged from a humble beginning marked by hardship and distress of great magnitude at home and abroad to a height of opulence and power. The Company came into existence when Queen Elizabeth, on the last day of 1600, granted a charter to some 220 gentlemen and merchants enabling them to engage in trade "as one body corporate in politic by the name of the Governor and Company of merchants of Land trading to the East Indies with a capital of £ 30, 135-6-8 divided into 101 shares. The charter authorized them to carry on a business of separate risk and profit for each shareholder till 1613 and thereafter on a joint stock basis.

The first settlement at Surat in A.D. 1613, on the Caromandal coast at Fort Saint George in A.D. 1640 and at Fort William in Bengal in A.D. 1698 was mere 'factories' for trading purposes. The management of the Company was entrusted to a Governor and twenty four Directors. The Company enjoyed the exclusive privilege of trading with all parts of Asia. In the early periods of its existence the Company encountered formidable difficulties. Its charter was annulled in 1693, when it failed to pay the duty of five per cent on capital stock imposed by the King.

Its privileges were, however, restored subsequently a new charter. In 1698 the exigencies of the state, caused by the wars in which Great Britain was involved induced Parliament to permit a new society to trade with India by the name, the English East India Company, in spite of the opposition raised

in a petition presented to the House of Commons by the London Company.



Land Revenue Administration under the Tamilian Kings:

Tamil Nadu in ancient times lay between Nellore on the north and the most southern extremity of the East coast, skirting the Mysore Plateau on the Western side. It was the scene of three old Hindu dynasties of Pandya, Chola and Chera.

The Pandya is generally identified with Madurai region, the Chola with Thanjavur region and Chera with Salem till the Palavas overran the Mohammedans and the British.

Land Revenue administration was the major concern of all the ruling dynasties in India. It was through the land revenue administration that the purpose for taxation in the welfare of the state was brought home to the people.

The kings demanded and obtained many varieties of taxes. Revenue from lands constituted the main source of income. Bishop Caldwell observes that the established practice throughout this part of the peninsula has for ages been to allow the farmer 1/2 of the produce of his crops for the maintenance of his family and for recultivation of the land while the other 1/2 is appropriated to the Sircar. But V.

Kanakasabhai is quiet confident that “1/6 of the produce from land was the legitimate share of the king”.

It was Manu’s Dictum It was Manu’s view that the Hindu Kings did not ever recognize individuals but made their arrangements for the payment of the share to State with the village elders representing the village community, which was the unit of fiscal Government, and which, as representing the shareholders, possessed a complete and indefeasible property in the land. The very village system, constituted and in force from early times, clearly establishes the fact that none of the former Governments had ever laid claim to property in the soil.

MANU says that “A king may take of grain an eighth part, a sixth, or a twelfth, according to the difference of the soil, and the labours necessary to cultivate it.” And adds that the king may levy even a fourth part out of necessity in times of urgency, as of war or invasion. During the reign of the Pandyas, the nature of the soil and the kinds of crops raised were taken in to consideration.

Under Rajaraja I, the Chola Emperor, all the lands within the Chola Empire were measured in order to fix land revenue. The survey of lands, which formed the basis of assessment. Nilakanta Sastri was of the opinion that the cultivators had to pay forty percent of the gross produce.

During the period of Vijayanagara rulers, the rate of land tax varied from place to place. However, the assessment was fixed on the basis of the gross produce. The rate of assessment was one-sixth of the produce payable either in kind or in cash. In the

produce payable either tax was collected only in cash. Robert Sewell was of the opinion that the rate of assessment in the Vijayanagar Empire was fifty percent. Under the Nayaks, the lands were divided in to crown lands and Palaiyams. The rate of assessment according to Jesuit Writer, Antoine Vico, was half of the produce. Sathianatha Aiyar rightly observes that generally the net produce was taken for the assessment of land revenue.

The Palayams were put under the custody of the Poligars. But the tribute from the Poligar to the crown was unreliable due to seasonal factors. During the rule of the Mysoreans, the Palayams were ruled by the amildars Peshcush was collected from the Poligars. When the Nawab of Arcot, was the ruler, he demanded fifty percent of the produce irrespective of the fertility of the soil. The oppressive revenue policy of the Nawab threw the cultivators into sad plight. The proportion of corruption and iniquity reached the zenith during the period of the Mysoreans and the Nawabs. When the State expanded and the population increased, revenue collection in kind became exceedingly difficult and the need was felt to commute it to a money equivalent. The first step in this direction was taken by Timur, one of the early Muslim rulers.

LEGISLATIONS ON REVENUE REFORMS

This chapter describes the changes that were introduced by the then Governments of the Madras State from 1947 to 1967 by causing several legislations in the field of Land Revenue Administration. The Governments were led by the Nationalists and the elected representatives of the Madras State.

The Indian Independence Act of 1947, constituted the culmination of the origin and growth of the Indian Legislatures from modest expansions of the Executive Councils of the Governor-General and the Governors in the Provinces into separate sovereign legislative bodies.

The First Legislature of the erstwhile Madras State under the Constitution of India was constituted on 1st March 1952, after the first General Elections were held in January 1952 on the basis of adult suffrage. According to the Delimitation of Parliament and Assembly Constituencies (Madras) Order, 1951 made by the President under section 6 and 9 of the representation of the people Act,1950, the then composite Madras Assembly consisted of 375 seats to be filled by election distributed in 309 Constituencies-243 single member Constituencies, 62 double member Constituencies in each of which a seat had been reserved for Scheduled Castes for Scheduled Tribes. Three seats were uncontested. The elections were contested only for the remaining 372 seats. One Member was nominated by the Governor under Article 333 of the Constitution to represent the Anglo-Indians.



The States Reorganization Act 1956 came into effect from the 1st November 1956 and consequently the constituencies in the erstwhile Malabar districts were merged with the Kerala State and its a consequence

the strength of the Assembly was further reduced to 190. The Tamil speaking area of Kerala (the present Kanniyakumari District) and Shencottah taluk were added to Madras State. Subsequently, the strength of the Madras Legislative Assembly was raised to 205. The Second Legislative Assembly was constituted 1st April 1957 after the General Elections, held in March 1957 consisted of 205 elected Members besides one nominated Member. As a result of the adjustment of boundaries between Andhra Pradesh and Madras Alterative of Boundaries Act, 1959, one member from the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly was allotted to Madras and consequently the strength of the Madras Assembly was increased to 206.

By the Two-Member Constituencies (Abolition) Act, 1961, the 38 double-member Constituencies were abolished and an equal number of single-member constituencies were reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. However, there was no change in the strength of territorial constituencies in Madras Assembly which had remained as 206.

The Third Assembly was constituted on the 3rd March 1962 after the General Elections held in February, 1962. The strength of the Assembly continued to be 206. By the Delimitation of Parliamentary and Assembly Constituencies Order, 1965, the number of territorial constituencies in Madras was increased to 234, out of which forty-two seats were reserved for Scheduled Castes and two seats for Scheduled Tribes besides one nominated member from the Anglo-Indian Community.

THE TIRUCHIRAPPALLI AIYERUWARAM AND MATTERUWARAM ACT, 1958 - XXXVI OF 1958

In certain parts of Tiruchirappalli district a peculiar kind of tenancy in respect of land called Kaiaeruwaram or attend waram existed. A Kaiaeruwaramdar was one engaged by a landlord to do ploughing and watering operations or ploughing operations alone on land and was remunerated for such work by a share in the crop raised on the land in respect of which such work is done or by payment of a fixed quantity of paddy or by both.

Similarly a mattuvaramdar was one engaged by a land owner to supply bulls for ploughing and other operations on a land and receive as remuneration for such work, a share in the crop on the land in respect of which such work is done. The uncertainties in the above relationship between the land owners and the waramdars led to frequent disputes leading to unsettled conditions, breaches of peace and consequently resulting in the fall of agricultural production in that district. It was in order to define the conditions of engagement and to provide protection of Kaiaeruwaramdar and Matteruwaramdars, this legislation was enacted.

The power of adjudication of disputes rests with the regular Tahsildars with a provision for appeal to the Revenue Divisional Officer. The provisions of the Madras Cultivating Tenants Protection Act, 1955 and the Madras Cultivating Tenants (Payment of Fair Rent) Act, 1956, had since been made applicable to Matteruwaramdar under a landowner who owned more than ten acres of wet land and such Matteruwaramdar shall be deemed to be a cultivating tenant within the meaning of these Acts

**THE TAMIL NADU LAND REFORMS
(FIXATION OF CEILING ON LAND) ACT, 1961
(TAMIL NADU ACT 58 OF 1961)**

The policy to abolish all the intermediaries (such as Zamins, Jagirs and Inams) was followed up by extending protection to and improvement of tenancy rights and the imposition of land ceiling as a further step in the agrarian reform.

The fixation of ceiling on land was under active consideration ever since, the Land Revenue Reforms Committee was appointed in 1950.⁶⁵ It examined this aspect also on the background of the landholdings obtaining in this State, which brought to light the concentration of land in the hands of a few landlords, quite detrimental to the interest of the peasantry population and retarding the economic development of the country and food output.

The Act was passed with the following objects and reasons

“Having regard to the recommendations of the Plan Commission in the Second Five Year Plan for reducing the glaring inequalities in the ownership of agricultural land, the Government had decided to undertake legislation for prescribing the maximum extent of agricultural land that a person may hold. The ceiling will, except as otherwise provided in the Bill, apply to all agricultural lands held by a person either as owners or as usufructuary mortgagee or as a tenant or as an intermediary or in one or more of those capacities. The provisions of the Bill were to apply to the whole of the State of Madras. The Bill contains provisions for the future acquisition of agricultural land”.

The Act which took retrospective effect from 6th April 1960 was a self contained code which defined all the incidence connected thereto, viz fixing

the limits up to which land can be held in the State, including the transferred territory of Kanniyakumari district and Shencottah taluk of Tirunelveli district. The Act was applicable to all land holdings owned or held by persons, companies, families and societies but not to plantations, topes, orchards, grazing lands, dairies and land held by sugar factories.

The ceiling limit on land holding as originally fixed depended on the number of members in the family, the extent of Stridhana lands held by the female members in that family and the surplus determined in the manner prescribed under the statute. The ceiling was 30 standard acres for a family of 5 members with an additional five acres for every additional member of the family subject to an overall standard ceiling limit of 60 standard acres.

Lands in hill areas were exempted from the Act. Standard Acre was defined as follows:

1. In any area in the State, except the transferred territory:

1. 0.8 acre of wet land assessed to land revenue at any rate above Rs. 15 per acre; or 1 acre of wet land assessed to land revenue at the rate of Rs. 10 and above but not exceeding Rs. 15 per acre; or acres of wet land assessed to land revenue at the rate of Rs. 8 and above but below Rs. 10 per acre; or
2. 1.6 acres of wet land assessed to land revenue at the rate of Rs. 6 and above but below Rs. 8 per acre; or
3. 1.75 acres of wet land assessed to land revenue at the rate of Rs. 4 and above but not exceeding Rs. 6 per acre; or

4. 2 acre of wet land assessed to land revenue at the rate of Rs. 4 per acre; or
5. 2.5 acres of dry land assessed to land revenue at the rate of Rs. 2 and above per acre; or
6. 3 acres of dry land assessed to land revenue at the rate of Rs. 1.25 and above but below Rs. 2 per acre; or
7. 4 acres of dry land assessed to land revenue at any rate below Rs. 1.25 per acre;

Compensation for surplus land taken over by Government was payable in the shape of 10 years bonds carrying 4 percent interest. The lands acquired by the Government were assigned to eligible person in accordance with the Tamil Nadu Land Reforms (Disposal of Surplus lands) Rules, 1965. The Act also imposed a ceiling of 5 standard acres for cultivating tenants.

After implementing the Act for about 10 years, it was found that its result was not appreciable. Even while the legislation was on the anvil, landholders owning large extents started disposing of their surplus landholding to whoever would offer a price, including benamidar or partitioned the fend among coparceners and relatives.

Trusts came into existence in large numbers. There was large scale adjustment of land holding within the ceiling, with the Ksuit that only a meager extent came to be declared as surplus. The exemptions granted under the Act also proved a handicap in securing a sizeable extent of land as surplus for distribution to bonafide and poor agriculturists.

After the breakdown of the British colonial rule and the introduction of agrarian reforms by the

Government after 1947 a few sections of these tenant holding were elevated to full or partial ownership of lands which the tenants had cultivated. But a very large section continued as tenants of the land lords, who were the actual proprietors of the land. Any amount of legislation, which has not been much, has not changed the situation thoroughly. If there is a law, there is a loophole and while the law may benefit the poor, the loopholes benefit the rich.

The land lords being stronger and more powerful than the tenants, they evicted many of the tenants and brought the lands under owner-supervised cultivation with the help of daily wage labourers. The fair Rent Act of 1956 also met with a similar fate. If the Land ceiling Act had been implemented forcefully, there would have been lands for redistribution to toe landlers. The road has been a long and arduous one and the journey is by no means finished. The active co-operation of the agrarian society is also essential for the situation to change.

CONCLUSION

This chapter recapitulates the various styles of land reforming structure and revenue collections practiced by various rulers and authorities in different centuries. It traces the evolution of property in land, its social control and the origin and growth of land revenue system. The revenue system of our country was only an extension of the system introduced by the Mughals and Britishers.

The Tamil Nadu Government has even gone a step ahead in waiving collection of land revenue on dry lands and the equivalent of the dry assessment on

wet lands, up to 5 acres in each holding consistent with the trend of modern thinking of

- Imposing an agricultural income-tax on income beyond certain limit or holding above a certain level.
- The levy of a betterment tax on ayacut is newly developed.
- The restructuring of the water rate with reference to the cost of maintenance of the sources.

Time has proved that the ryotwari tenure is the only ideal tenure both for the state and for the land holder, as intermediary tenures that were created from time to time have only helped the middlemen to prosper at the cost of agricultural economy. This research work deals with the various types of tenures and the steps taken over the years to abolish all intermediaries and confer ryotwari rights on the occupancy ryots or land holders of the state.

The land revenue system during the study period was well organized in a systematic way and thoroughly covered all the features in an efficient form. This study is a rewarding exercise to the researcher to have an insight of Land Revenue System practiced from ancient to the present Government. The researcher will be much delighted if the revenue officials utilize the highlights of efficient functioning of revenue administration during the notable reformers who were really have had the vision of the welfare of the people and government during the study period.

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