

# Evolution and Impact of Agrarian and Revenue Systems: A Study of Hyderabad State

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## ABSTRACT

This article based on the ‘evolution and impact of agrarian and revenue systems: A study of Hyderabad state’ during the second half of the 19th century important changes have taken place in the agricultural sector. The new land revenue reforms and the land tenure systems introduced by Salar Jung contributed to the growth of agriculture cultivation and the introduction of modern methods of cultivation increased the yields. Importantly, the state of Hyderabad was on Economic depression and unfavorable trade due to impact I world war struck the state economy. However, the area under cultivation in 18 percent at the end of the period against 1911. The disappointed rainfall resulted in restricted cultivation for the period 1921-31. Consequence was cattle loss and people migration. Part of the Telangana declared as famine-stricken and relief rendered. The state experienced good health of its economy during the period 1901-1911. During the period, irrigation and railway expansion and increase in textile and mine industry. Agricultural methods were improved and area cultivated advanced (84 per cent increased from 1881 figure). It resulted in increase in population (36 per cent). In 1911-1921, the natural calamity, plague (1911) and influenza epidemic (1918-19) were the main setbacks. Hyderabad State evolved from the Mughal Provinces of the Deccan under NizamulMulkAsalJah. The Mughal agrarian system as existing in the Deccan was continued and adopted by NizamelMulk and it formed the basis for that of Hyderabad. The same was continued by Nizam Ali Khan and his successors with some changes and improvement from time to time to the exigencies of time and for the benefit and welfare of the people. The study may be classified into three systems as followed Land Revenue System, Jagirdari System and the Chauth and Sardeshmukhi System.

**Keywords:** agrarian and revenue systems, Hyderabad state, Hyderabad was on Economic depression, Land Revenue System, Jagirdari System, Sardeshmukhi System

## INTRODUCTION

Hyderabad State evolved from the Mughal Provinces of the Deccan under NizamulMulkAsalJah. The Mughal agrarian system as existing in the Deccan was continued and adopted by NizamelMulk and it formed the basis for that of Hyderabad. The same was continued by Nizam Ali Khan and his successors with some changes and improvement from time totime to the exigencies of time and for the benefit and welfare of the people. The study may be classified into three systems as followed Land Revenue System, Jagirdari System and the Chauth and Sardeshmukhi System. When Aurangzeb was sent in 1652 for the second time as the bedar of the Deccan, he was specially charged with the task of improving the land revenue system in Deccan. Aurangzeb, in fum, entrusted the work of land revenue

reforms to MurshidQuli Khan, diwar of Berar Balaghat, who was assisted for some time by Multafat Khan, disun of Berar-PaiynghatMurshidQuli Khan found that the Deccan had no land revenue system at all. His reforms consisted in extending the Mughal system in the Deccan. First, he worked hard to gather the scattered ryots together and restore the normal life of the villages by giving them their full population and proper chain of officers. Everywhere wise amins and honest surveyors were deputed to measure the land, to prepare the record of well-marked-out holdings (raghu) and to distinguish arable land from rocky soils and water courses after the measurement of land, MurshidQuli Khan introduced the system of metayership or sharing of the actual produce.

Telangana people's discontent and upsurge was so deep and great that they put an end to vetti, illegal exactions; compulsory grain levies and started to reoccupy the lands seized earlier by the landlords. People started resisting the landlords' armed attacks, got ready to face the armed police and even the military forces of the Nizam; women joined the resistance in every manner possible and a mass cultural upsurge of militant songs, folk arts, took place. As part of its resistance movement, the Party gave a call to defy court summons and arrest warrants, called them not to get caught by the police, resist confiscation and auction of properties. The masses responded enthusiastically and carried out these instructions to the letter, developing newer and newer forms of resistance. People looked after the Party leaders as the apple of their eye. In these struggles, except towards the latter part of 1946, peasant squads were not trained to take up fire-arms. Party instructed the volunteer squads not to take recourse to arms, as it would transform the struggle into an entirely new stage and would have all-India repercussions. Where the crop depended on rainfall, the State took one-half of the produce (b) Where agriculture depended on well-rigation, the share of the State was one-third in the case of grain and from one ninth to one-fourth in the case of grape, sugarcane, anse, plantain, and other special and high priced crops requiring laborious watering and length of culture, and Where the field was irrigated from canals (pat), the proportion of the reverse to the cropvried being sometimes higher and sometimes lower than in lands imgated from wells. However, the standard of maximum Government share was one-fourth of the total produce, whether grain or poherb, for seed the reverse at the fixed rate of so many pees per bigha was assessed and collected aller considering the quantity and quality of the crop from seed time to harvest and its market price and actually measuring the sown area.

## **FEUDAL EXPLOITATION IN TELANGANA**

The implementation of procuring food grain i.e., compulsory levy programme gave an opportunity for the police and officials to resort to frued, corruption and favouritism. In collusion with the officials and the police, the landlords avoided the compulsory levy, hoarded food grains and profited from the rising prices on food grains. Thus, procuring food grains through a compulsory levy programme of the government failed. The poor peasants and landless labourers and the rich and middle peasants too were subjected to harassment under this programme. This resulted in the general agrarian discontent. This procurement levy regulation provided the rich peasants in every region with an excuse that the wages of the poor did not increase as prices. Thus, the agrarian social structure was so changed with the discontentment that it led to an insurrectionary movement. The post war political developments and economic crisis provided an impetus to a sustained peasant revolt. Jagirdaritenural system formed the basis for all this misery. Among the tenures the jagirdar was most typical feudal. Over the years, the number of jagirdars steadily increased. Apart from illegal collections, people were exploited through

hired ‘Gondas’ who were maintained by Deshmukhs, guttedars, patels and patwaries. The extent of exploitation indulged by these Jagirdars, Paigah’s and holders of Samstanas can be aged from the fact that 1,110 of them used to extract Rs.10 crores every year in the form of various taxes from the peasantry. Whereas the whole revenue income of the Hyderabad State prior to 1840 A.D. was not more than Rs. 8 crores. This was only the legally admitted collection. But when we compare the income of the State with the income of the feudals of the Hyderabad State it can be understood how feudals sucked the blood of peasantry of Hyderabad State. Every residence of the landlord known as 'Gadi' was a court and resident of the 'Gadi' was judge and his mediators were advocates. The judges of these courts usually get money through the agents of Deshmukhs. Civil courts of Nizam State did not have any jurisdiction over the courts which survived in 'Gadi' of Telangana. This is the phenomenon not only in Jagirdari area but al so in Khalsa of Diwani area. This was continued till the abolition of the Jagirdari system.

**EFFECTS OF FAMINE ON THE REVENUE**

There was a good deal of difficulty as to the actual loss of revenue caused by the famine.<sup>1</sup> The Report of the Public Works Commission (1852) states that from 1832 to 1850—1851 in 18 years there was a less of land revenue of Rs.77,50,000 and that on land custom, sale, and exercise there was an annual loss of Rs. 1,02,784 . Assuming that loss to the ryots bears to the loss of Government revenue. The proportion of 60 to 40 diminutions in their profits from failure of crops would be 116 lakhs. The value of sheep and cattle that perished was estimated to amount up to 2.25 million sterling. The Board of Revenue, however, stated that falling off in the public receipts was partly due to other causes and that the land revenue had recovered itself by 1837-1838 the revenue was steadily decreasing from causes independent of drought the chief of which were breakdown of the Zamindari system and the growing conviction that ryotwari land was assessed to high. The yearly collections are thus shown.<sup>2</sup>

**Table-2.1 Decrease in Yearly Collection**

Years	Rs
Average in 1825-31	313, 13,900
Average in 1832-33	267, 44, 400
Decrease	45, 69, 500

(Report of Indian Famine Commission, 1878, Vol.I, p.7)

In the following years the collection again surpassed the previous average.

<sup>1</sup>. Ibid., p.7.

<sup>2</sup>.Ibid.

**Table-2.2 Yearly Collection in Increase**

Years	Rs
1833—34	316,03,000
1834—35	316,37,000
1835—36	313, 37, 000
1836—37	297, 53, 000
1837—38	326, 31, 000

(Report of Indian Famine Commission, 1878, Vol.I, p.8)

The decrease in the land revenue due to famine was set down as about 45.5 lakhs of rupee and the injury done did not outlast the year. In effect, however, there was in 1832-33 a decrease of Rs.1,81,000 in sea custom, Rs.1,41,000 in salt, Rs. 3,26,000 adding all those together; the total loss of income to the state amounted to about 52 lakhs of rupees. <sup>3</sup>

### **ROLE OF TELANGANA PEOPLES ARMED STRUGGLE**

Telangana People's Armed Struggle is one of the glorious phases in the freedom struggle of our country and also of the communist movement. The struggle, which started against the feudal exploitation of the Nizam rule in the erstwhile Hyderabad State in 1946, continued till 1951. The Telangana struggle can be broadly divided into three phases – the initial phase, struggle against the vetti system and eviction from land; the second phase, ouster of Nizam, establishment of village self-rule and distribution of land to the tiller and the third and final phase, safeguarding the gains and withdrawal of the struggle. Hyderabad State consisted of three linguistic regions, Telangana area consisting eight Telugu-speaking districts (50 per cent of the area), Marathwadaregion of five Marathi-speaking districts (28 per cent), and three Kannada-speaking districts (22 per cent).

The culture and language of the overwhelming majority of people living in the state was suppressed by the rulers, and their natural desire for education and cultural development, for protection and development of their own mother-tongue got inevitably linked up with the struggle against the Nizam's rule. The basic feature that dominated the socio-economic life of the people, especially in Telangana was the unbridled feudal exploitation. About 60 per cent of the land in the state was governmental land and about 10 per cent was Nizam's own estate. The jagir areas constituted 30 per cent of the total state and jagirdars were the feudal oppressors. Here, land taxes on irrigated lands used to be ten times more than those collected in government lands. Various kinds of illegal exactions and forced labour were the normal feature. Some of these jagirdars had their own separate police, revenue, civil and criminal systems.

<sup>3</sup> . *Ibid.*, p.8.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In Telangana, vetti system was an all-pervasive social phenomenon. Each dalit family had to send one man from the family to do vetti. Their daily jobs consisted of household work in the landlord's house and also act as their messenger. Dalits, who stitched shoes or prepared leather accessories for agricultural operations were forced to supply these to the landlords free of cost. Toddy-tappers had to supply toddy; shepherds, their sheep; weavers, cloth; carpenters and blacksmiths, all agricultural implements and potters, pots, free of cost. Washermen were forced to wash clothes and vessels and barbers had to do daily service in the house and at night press the feet of the landlord and massage his body. Certain Other Backward Communities were forced to carry men and women of the landlord families in palanquins, from one village to another.

Peasants were also not spared of vetti. They had to till the lands of the landlords before they could work in their own fields. Until the landlords' lands were watered, peasants would not get water for their fields. Agricultural labourers had to work in landlord's fields without any remuneration and only then go to other peasants' work for their livelihood. These various forms of forced labour and exactions were extracted not only by the landlords, but by all the officials, petty or high. The worst of all these feudal exactions was the prevalence of keeping girls as 'slaves'. When landlords gave their daughters in marriage they presented these slave girls and sent them along with their married daughters, to serve them in their new homes. These slave girls were used by the landlords as concubines. Vetti system utterly degraded the life of Telangana people and ruined their self-respect. It was on this issue that the peasantry came into head-on confrontation with the feudal lords at the beginning of the 1940s. By that time, the Communist Party had become an organised force and was able to identify itself with these fighting, oppressed tenants and the rural poor. Nizam's rule was an autocratic rule, where there were no elected bodies at any level and no civil liberties whatsoever. It was against such a regime that the growing number of liberals, influenced by the development of the national movement in India, organised themselves into the Andhra Mahasabha, a broad political, cultural organisation in the Telangana region, into the Maharashtra Parishad and Kannada Parishad in the other two regions. Andhra unit of the Communist Party contacted many militant and progressive cadres among them and was able to build powerful groups in Telangana.

Initially, the Andhra Mahasabha confined itself to passing resolutions demanding reforms in the administrative structure, civil liberties, for more schools and concessions for the landed gentry, but did not mobilise people and launch struggles against the oppressors or the Nizam. The Communist Party did a stupendous work in taking the Andhra Mahasabha to the people. Moderates in the Andhra Mahasabha were opposed to this. The Left, led by Communists, demanded the abolition of vetti, ban on rack-renting, eviction of tenants and for confirmation of title deeds to the lands they were cultivating, drastic reduction of taxes and rents, compulsory survey settlements, abolition of tax on toddy trees, abolition of jagirdari and full responsible government and rallied people behind these demands. From the beginning of 1944, Andhra Mahasabha under the leadership of the Communist Party conducted many struggles against zamindars and desh mukhs. The Sangham, as the Andhra Mahasabha was affectionately called, led these struggles by planting red flags in the fields. People under the leadership of the Sangham did not allow goondaism, they stopped giving bribes, nazaras to big landlords and performing vetti.

In this background, in 1946, VisnurRamachandra Reddy, the hated deshmukh of Jangaontaluka, forcibly tried to take possession of land belonging to Ailamma, who was a staunch supporter and worker of the Sangham. He planned to seize the harvest directly from the fields. Seeing Sangham volunteers marching with lathis and fierce determination, the goondas ran for their lives. The harvest was gathered and sent to Ailamma's house. The same night police arrived, but they dared not touch the harvested grain stored in Ailamma's house. This incident roused the spirit of the people and lit the spark for the Telangana struggle.

Following this incident, on July 4, 1946, a procession was organised, on which the stooges of the landlords fired many shots, leading to the death of village Sangham leader DoddiKomarayya. Komarayya's martyrdom set ablaze the pent-up fury of the Telangana peasantry. People rose in all taluks in Nalgonda en masse. People of one village armed with sticks and slings would march to the neighbouring villages and rouse them. A special feature of these processions was that along with men, women also took part not only in their own village, but in other villages also. People who came from neighbouring villages were fed without any distinction of caste and religion. They would jointly hold public meetings before the gadi (house of the deshmukh or the landlord), hoist the red flag and declare: 'Sangham is organised here. No more vetti, no more illegal exactions, no evictions'. If the landlord or the deshmukh did not carry out these orders of the Sangham, they were socially boycotted. These orders of the Sangham were implemented and none worked for the landlord. Within a few weeks, the movement spread to about 300-400 villages in Nalgonda and neighbouring districts. For the first time, the problem of land, eviction and vetti and forcible grain levies, were connected with the slogan of abolition of zamindari system, and that was the main feature of this period.

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