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AGRARIAN RELATIONS IN TELANGANA (1920-1950) – A STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Ideologies to solve the contradictions diffused in the nature due to their class background, there can be different causes of agrarian unrest and agrarian movements. Some assign primacy to the transformation of the agrarian economy through commercialization. Other speak of demographic factors and sudden economic political occurrence, while another view holds social crises, crisis in power and authority, etc. as one of the prominent causes for agrarian movements. The agrarian relations that shaped the agrarian structure have been a primary factor for the contradictions that developed factor for the contradictions that developed letter in various parts of the country during the British period. It is one of the important dimensions to understand the nature of the historical social, economic and political structure as well as the status of the peasantry. This research article to be discussed Agrarian relations in feudal estates of Nizam Dominion – A Study of Telangana.

Keywords: Agrarian Relations, Agrarian Policies, Feudal Estates, Nizam Dominion, Nomadic Races, Hindu Social Order, Vetti (Slavery), Peoples Assertion, Colonial Rule, Artisan System.

Introduction

Statement of Problem

Agricultureis our wisest pursuit, because it will in the contribute most to reel wealth good morals and happiness.

George Washington

The village shaped by the Mauryan polity was a self- sufficient village. The vast history of India can be witnessed for several territorial kingdoms right from the emergence of idea of State upto Indian Independence. Such India has a long list of dynasties ruled one after another by various rulers. But the tragedy is that native or foreign rulers having different religious ideology could not bring about any change in the existing frame work of social ideology of the village or the economy or the republic Indian village through the ages. The Indian village which has self- sufficient economic character has three social essential elements, which are even today visible as follows:

1. Peasant castes
2. Artisan castes,
3. Servicing castes,

Based on the above, 'Jajmani System' was evolved. In the 'Jajmani System' the products of various skills exchanged with each other without indicating the price or the economic values for their products. Apart from the consumption and revenue to the State the surplus production of the village was generally brought to the Angadi or Santha (Market) to exchange the needs of the village. This product was usually exchanged with another product, which is known as barter system.

Telangana Village – A Historical Perspective

The village community has been recognised as a unique entity widely from the village of West Europe, the 'mir' of Russia, the German 'mark' or the Chinese village. Various efforts are made to locate the causes of the emergence of this unique unit of rural life in India. The monumental work on the Indian village done by Henry Maine attracted the attention of social workers, literatures and Historians. The contribution of the Metcalfe about Indian village community, which has been unchanging through the ages, also attracted the various sections of the people in perceiving the unique characteristics of the village. The historical research shows that even in the remote past the early races of the India such as the Kolerians, Dravidians and the Aryans, with those history we have to some extent, acquainted invariably grouped themselves into villages as soon as they passed through the pastoral or nomadic stage and took to settled agriculture. In the beginning these village groups were merely the outcome of natural and social needs rather than the result of any thought-out system of administration.

The glimpses of the agricultural system and references to the self-governing village communities are scattered all through Jain and Buddhist texts dating from the 6th century B.C. the Canonical literature of the Buddhist elaborately referred to the arrangements of



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villages, towns and forts. Gama, Nigaama, Kula, and Nagarika are often mentioned. Whereas Jains texts referred to the arrangements such as Ghosa, Kheta, Kharvata, Gram, Palli, Pattana, Samvaha, Uagara, Matamba etc., Village in the Buddhist Jatakas usually consisted of families numbering upto thousand. According to Arthasastra, village boundaries demarcated by river, hill, forest ditches, tanks, bunds and trees of various descriptions. The general distances between one village to another village is two 'Krosha' The self-sufficiency means the raw materials were close at hand. Wood growing within the village area, could be used for building and implements. Cotton was available in many parts of the country. Most of the goods produced were consumed in the village and the surplus could be disposed of in the village fairs, held in a week. The hand workers derived their skills through the heritage of centuries and their respective occupations had a religious sanction behind them.

The Indian village system did not witness even a little change in any aspect till the muslim rule was established in India. During the Muslim rule the changes which took place were not neither radical nor progressive. But those changes could not touch neither the frame work nor the nature of the self- sufficient economy of Indian village. Whereas during the colonial rule radical changes for the first time came into existence in the revenue field. The fruits of these changes could not provide neither" the economic nor the social justice to the son of the soil. The changes which reported to meet the needs of colonial administrative frame work through the Acts, could influence the tenural nature and character. But they could not basically change the social set up which was already existed on the base of ancient community village system. The colonial rule in India was very interested only in extracting economic resources, but not in introducing changes in the social structure. That's why the Indian village could not change in all its aspects. In the light of the above, the Agrarian Acts could not register the results for the benefit of the son of soil or real cultivator. Infact the Agrarian Acts failed because the real cultivators were evicted by the landlords who were enable to hold huge lands with legal rights and who have accessibility with State and its bureaucracy.

Agricultural Economy

The rise of the village is bound up with the rise of agricultural economy in history. The emergence of village signified that, man passed from the nomadic mode of collective life to the settled one. This was basically due to the improvement of tools of production which made agriculture and settled life on fixed territorial basis possible and necessary. In different parts of the world human race, that passed from the nomadic hunting and food gathering stage to that, based on robing hoe on agriculture and thereafter on settled plough agriculture carried on by means of craft, animals, has been one of the most difficult and complex problems in the field of social interest. With the invention of the plough, man could develop stable agriculture, the basic source of assured food supply. With this the nomadic life of the human being has been ceased. No longer men roamed in herbs from place to place in search of means of substance. The settled and a defined territory and organised villages were based on agricultural economy. Agrarian communities, with villages as their fixed habitation and agriculture as their main occupation, came into existence. This event was the landmark in the history of mankind inaugurating a higher phase of social existence. Agriculture assured the community for the first time, a relatively stable food supply in contrast to previous stages of social life. While food supply derived from such sources as hunting, fishing, fruit gathering and shifting hoe agriculture had always been insufficient food grain and other types of food products derived from plough agriculture could be counted upon and also be stored for use in the emergency period, thereby assuring relative food security for the future.

In the agricultural phase, the struggle for existence became relatively less acute for man. Further, at certain stage of the development of agricultural economy due to the greater productivity in agricultural sector, a section of the community could be liberated from the necessity of participating in food production and could therefore concentrate on secondary industrial and ideological activities. This gave momentum to the growth of technology, arts, science and philosophy. It also brought the significant transition slowly in the social organisation of humanity. The stage of social organisation founded kinship and clan to that based on territorial ties. With the development of agriculture, at a certain level mankind took a leave from collectivist than society to territorial civil society. With its distinct multi-class social structure and the resultant institutions of the State. Civilisation began with the development of agriculture. The village was the first settled form of collective human habitation and the product of growth of agricultural economy. This historically gave birth to rural society and from the surplus of its food resources flourished the town which subsequently came in to existence.

In the history of people living in different parts of the world, different types of the villages emerged with the rise and spread of agriculture. This was mainly due to, difference in geographical environments in which those people lived. Further, settlers of the early village also underwent changes in time, due to it~ subsequent technical, economic and social invasions. Marx Weber argued that India had a stable and unchanging society because of the caste system. Caste separated education from craft, segregated skills and destroyed individual ambitions. This prevented economic mobility and created firmly stable, but stagnant economic structure.



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Artisan Caste System

In the light of the above the age old agrarian structure policies and tenural systems as a part of feudal politics have been rapidly replaced by the new land tenural systems to the tune of political economy of colonial rule by the East India Company of England. The new tenural systems were not only implemented in various territorial administrative divisions under the direct control of British paramount Government, but also adopted by several native dominions which were not under the direct control of the Britishers. This process registered drastic changes towards the peasant society in British dominions as well as in the native dominions in India. As a result of this, the son of the soil, or real cultivator, alienated from the right of cultivating the land, which was bestowed on him through the ages. During the same period a class of the society, who does not know the alphabet of either tilling the land or carrying out agricultural activities, was made holder of the land and recognised later as occupants and pattedars of the land.

Caste in India an artificial chopping off the population into fixed and definite units, each one prevented from fusing into another through the custom of endogamy. Thus, the conclusion is that Caste In India is inevitable endogamy which is unique character. Caste is considered in Indian sub-continent as a peculiar social category. But caste is hardly analysed by social scientist as an economic category, though its manifestation is social and the essence of its purely economic. Infact, the first social anthropologists who had examined caste had introduced the concept of 'jajmani' for the first time in 1930's (H.W.Wiser) analysed the transactions between different castes in a village as purely economic. The real transactions between 'dwijas' (Brahmins and Kshatriyas) and Non-dwijas and among the survival caste and untouchable caste were found to be purely economic in nature. The studies of H.W.Wiser on Kalimpur village regarding the understanding the nature of the caste reveals that, the values are translated as returns on each castes property, the concept of caste as an economic category will be cleared. However, the Hindu caste as property has certain limitations. The character of property as a thing to exchange with others or sell it to outsiders is very much limited here.

Caste being a property of a group of people can be utilized for the advantage of the members of the group. This has also been used for the exploitation of others and also empowering one's own group. These concepts have been used here to understand the economic power of the dominant caste in India. Caste in Hindu social order is based on the principles of grades inequality. It may not be an exaggeration to say that not many people understand the significance of this principle. The social system based on inequality stands on a different footing, from a social system based on graded inequality. It is a pity that caste even today has its defenders. The defences are many. It is defended on the ground that, the caste system has another name for division of labour and if division of labour is necessary feature of every civilised society, it is argued that there is nothing wrong in the caste system. But truly the caste system is not merely a division of labour. It is also a division of labourers civilised society undoubtedly needs division of labour. But in no civilised society is division of labour accompanied by this unnatural division of labourers into water tight. compartments. Caste system is not merely a division of labourers which is quite different from division of labour. It is a hierarchy in which the divisions of labourers are graded one above the other.

Since Caste largely determines the ideals and patterns of life of the rural social groups, it also considerably shapes the value systems prevailing in value patterns of the rural society impress of caste traditions than rural bear a society. The form greater the urban those of society, where extra caste institutions ideologies operate. Generally, a village in India has more than one caste. Each caste in a village is made up more than one lineage and clan. A map of a village will show almost invariably that the habitation area of each caste is separated from that of the other by a greater or a lesser distance. A few castes may live in houses situated side by side, but other lives apart. The caste which are always separated from the others are those whose touch was supposed to pollute the rest - the so-called untouchables.

Kinship is one affinity are the major determines that shape the social structure of these communities. In India, the joint family was taken granted as basic feature of the agrarian economy. The family as a primary social unit is closely connected with the economic system. The family was both a unit of production and consumption. Every member of the family was a potential bread winner. Family acts as a socializing agent. The joint family is basic social unit in Indian society. The nature of the family structure, however it is flexible in subject to variation depending upon the character of the social system in which it exists.

Except the leisure and usurping social elements the remaining social elements, i.e., producing castes, artisan caste and servicing castes contributed the different skills to the agrarian economy in rural India. The elders of the village, who looked after the community property in South Asia used to distribute the agricultural lands (which is the means of production only) among the producing castes, based on members of the family. These producing castes were not the owners or proprietors of the land. But these castes were giving the right to cultivate the land, as long as cultivator pays the revenue fixed by the Government. Right from the Mauryans till the Guptas, the conquered lands or territories were under the direct supervision of monarchs. But from the time of Guptas villages under monarch were assigned to certain people, who rendered different services such as supplying army, horses, and so on so forth. In this way, people



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of this type though they were holders of village or villages, but they were neither owners nor proprietors. The various types of tenures spread over in different territorial kingdoms through the ages.

Agrarian Policies and Land Revenue Acts

When 1317 Fasli Land Revenue Act of Hyderabad state had recognised the ownership. rights over the land, the removal of agents from revenue collection in 1866 A.D. who became land owners i, first time by grabbing land more and more. This, in its turn had resulted in increasing their power over villages from the status of a mere revenue collector to 'Dora' a landlord. Apart from this acquisition of more powers which they could exercise now, the introduction of commercial crops led to concentration of inequalities in the socio-economic structure. For these new landlords extracted vetti for growing these commercial crops which enriched them on one hand but made the workers to work overtime without compensation. The dying feudal force of India in general, Telangana particularly gained. The strength by becoming legal occupants of land with the help of Acts introduced by colonial rule. The growing commercial crops coupled the increasing burden on the peasantry due to extraction of more services in the form of Vetti by landlords. This acted as the major source of discontentment among the poor peasantry. Apart from the above, the tribal peasants had long standing grievances. In this respect tribals were against money lenders, revenue officers and private contractors who usurped their lands, exploited them in the forest works on construction side, in mines and collieries. And on account of failure to pay land revenue during the period of 1911-31, the outstanding dues from the peasants were to the extent of Rs.27,000/- and they were forcibly collected by auctioning their lands.

The fall in wholesale price of the agricultural products during the period of depression (1929-39) led to the social discontentment. It effected one and all except Deshmukhs, Makthedars and landlords. Al though the prices were slightly higher between 1936 and 1940, they were not as high as the prices in 1922. Throughout the 1920's therefore the cash incomes of all these cultivators who produced for the market fell considerably. In this regard D.N. Dhangare pointed out that the price trends strengthened the positions of money lenders and traders who tightened their grip on the indebted small pattadars and tenants which led to the alienation of their lands. Subsequently Tenancy Committee was appointed by government in 1937 for investigating the status and conditions of tenants in the State which recommended a minimum tenural security. Thus, this resulted in the enactment of a Tenancy Act by the Government. The act remained practically a defunct piece of legislation which only further aggravated the agrarian discontent.

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 fraud, 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. Jagirdari tenural 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 gaged 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 judge 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 jag i r area but al so in Khalsa of Diwani area. This was continued till the abolition of the Jagirdari system.

Vetti (Slavery System)

Apart from the economic form of exploitation that had been intensified during the period of agriculture, the non-economic forms of exploitation like 'Vetti' also had their impact on peasantry. Some of these forms of exploitation were peculiar in Telangana affecting all classes of people in varying degrees.



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The prevalent Vetti forms of exploitation in Telangana were akin to the forms in West Bengal. The landlord held more than one job -like sole employer, money lender, and in some cases judge or magistrate. This concentration of power had made them all powerful. Especially the vetti Madiga prepared ropes, baskets and shoes for all his bhagelas and cultivation needs. In brief, the landlord exercised a good bit of real sovereignty subordinating every person and every process to the deriving the maximum net income. Every person from each family irrespective of his/her, caste and occupation, including Brahmin, was not exempted, from the Vetti. They were forced to stitch platters (made of leaves) for the landlords. The worst of all feudals exactions was the prevalence of keeping girls as 'Slaves' in landlords houses. At the times of the marriage of their daughters the landlords of Telangana usually used to present such slave girls known as adapapa and send them along with their married daughters to serve them in their new homes. These adapapas were used by the landlords as concubines.

Apart from the above the system of bhagela was equally obnoxious part of Telangana culture. Generally, bhagelas were drawn from oborginal tribes who were customary retainers and tied to their masters by debt. They had to work for their master's generation after generation through object serfdom. Thus, Vetti as a perversion of feudalism in Telangana especially during the reign of the last Nizam, has spilled beyond production. It became a perverted part of the culture of the traditional feudal Jajmani system which was based on the principle of reciprocal exchanges. In this regard one historian observed that in the villages especially in Telangana countryside, where land was owned by big landlords called maktedars or the pattedars, serfdom and semi-slavery known as bhagelas and vettichakiri (begari) were common feature of the day. This social, economic injustice led to a popularization of peasants who under the guidance of literature intellectual body known as Andhra Maha Sabha (AMS) protested against the above coercive forms of labour.

Communist Party of India and Peasant Movement

The members of the newly formed communist party of India organised in Hyderabad State started undertaking political education of themselves. The party units were provided with a programme to mobilise the peasants. In 1940 when the Communist party of India decided to form Kisan Sabha (peasants organisation), the government banned the proposed organisation. The party in it's second "thought planned to use Andhra Maha Sabha as a vehicle for organising rural masses because of Andhra Maha Sabha was not in the banned list. At that time, it was in the hands of moderate leadership.

In post-war crisis the local branches of Andhra Maha Sabha called as 'Sangham' launched village level struggles against the feudals. In course of this peasant mobilisation had been initiated in jagir area. For instance, the peasants of Kolanpak jagir, which was under Turab Yar Jung holder of Bondugula, Chinna Kandukuru and half of Ragtunathpur village etc. revolted. This revolt was organised under the leadership of Bellapkonda Lingaiah, later the case was taken to the High Court and Lingaiah was acquitted. Thus, Turab Yar Jung was forced to enter into the compromise with the peasants and agreed to reduce 10 percent of the tax on land. This struggle was considered to be the first in its kind in the history of Telangana. Similar peasant mobilisations and revolts were organised in Nalgonda District by lambadas against Pusukuri Raghava Rao so also against Kadari Narsimha Rao landlord of Mondrai. There was a great mobilisation and revolt against Janna Reddy Pratap Reddy who had 1,50,000 acres of land in his name in different villages. The peasants of Chilupakunta, Yedavellu and Nutankallu stopped giving bribes, nazranas and doing vetti to this landlord. This mobilisation was organised under the leadership of Gajula Ramachandraiah, a harijan who resisted the gondaism of landlord.

In the same manner Kunduru Laxmikantha Rao of Patha Suryapet, Bhogala Veera Reddy of Bakkavantulagudem, Chennoru Veerabhadra Rao in Mellacheruvu, Anwarpasha Jagidar of Allipuram and Timmapuram of Warangal District, Pingali Ranga Reddy was a known as excise contractor of Warangal District, Venkat Narasimha Reddy who evicted the peasants from their lands in term, the peasants of the above organised themselves to mobilize and revolt against the landlords of the above. In the light of the peasant organisation and its mobilization, Deshmukhs, Jagirdars, maktedars and landlords had increased their repression. As a part of this, many false cases were filed against peasants of Telangana. In process of this on 4th July, 1946 Doddi Komuraiah became a martyr. This incident sparked off the agrarian movement in Telangana, became the turning point in the Telangana Armed Struggle which continued for five years which peasants rallied against the feudals and later against the State.

Summing up

This research paper study is an attempt to analyse agrarian relations in feudal estates of Nizam dominion the changes with the interferences of acts which were the offshoot of colonial state occurred in the agrarian structure in Telangana during the first half of the 20th century mainly focused on 1940-50. During this period many changes like landownership pattern, credit, marketing system and ultimately the socio-economic and political base of the agrarian structure forced to undergo many changes with the interferences of colonial state of India. All these drastic changes had their cumulative impact on the illiterate, ignorant peasantry who alienated from the land in light of the new changes. This led to the spread of rural indebtedness which became a economic burden to the peasantry has been increased day by day. Ultimately the changes occurred in Telangana finally led to historic armed peasant struggle which is culminating



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point for the agrarian unrest. All these cataclysmic changes had been considered as leading to changes in agrarian structure and for a brief period a new system of agrarian relations prevailed in country side of Telangana during 1945-50. The object of this study is to trace-out the historical account of all these changes due to the introduction of new acts which had been responsible for the emergence of a new pattern of agrarian system that existed in Telangana. At the end of first half of the 20th Century, the land problem came to the fore front and peasants were mobilised on the issues related to the land relations. The introduction of act in agrarian sector in general in India, Telangana of Hyderabad state in particular initiated the process of inherent contradictions in the agrarian economy of Telangana had clearly come out after 1940s. The systematisation of ownership rights which made Deshmukhs quite powerful on one hand and the commercialisation of agriculture, albeit, slowly on the other accentuated the inequalities in the socio-economic structure. Thus, in 1940s the unrest among the peasantry reached its peak and mobilisation of the peasantry for the redressal of their grievances started.

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