CHAPTER IV
CONDITION OF PEASANTS UNDER FIVE YEAR PLANS
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Peasant, a word of French origin, came to be widely used in English from the 15th century for one who worked on land and also lived in the village. Peasants formed the largest section of the people of this region. They lived a life characterized by utter poverty and backwardness and the issue of their modernization became a serious challenge to the intelligentsia there. The latter naturally turned their attention towards understanding the nature and life of peasantry.

In India it was the poverty of peasantry which compelled the Colonial authorities in the second half of the 19th century to take interest in the investigation of the living condition of the lower classes of peasants. Considering all the characteristics of peasant economy, Thornier held the view in 1962 that “India is today still a peasant economy”.

THE CONDITION OF THE PEASANTS IN TAMILNADU

Since Sangam period agriculture has been considered as the primary and prestigious occupation in Tamil Nadu. Agriculturists were called Kalamar, Ulavar, Kadayan, Ullathiar and Kadaichiar which all furnish the same meaning. The ancient Tamil literatures proved that Ulavars were originally agriculturists, in Tamilnadu. Even today in Kerala the ‘Pallars’ are called Mallars. In later times, the agriculturists became ‘Uluthunpor’ and ‘Ulvithunpor’ thus the later formed the group of agricultural serfs. In

1 Raymond Williams, Keywords, Glasgow, 1976, p.194.
2 Teodor Shanin, Peasantry as a Political Factor 1971, p.194.
4 Daniel Thorner, Peasant Economy as a Category in Economic History, p.212.
the scheduled caste list of Tamil Nadu they are listed as Kudumaban and Deivendhra kulathar. These are identically inter-changeable. In ancient times the ‘Pallars’ who were originally agriculturists belong to warier group since the word ‘Mallar means brave’. The Mallar of ancient time is being called as Pallars at present. Thus the agrarian relations have varied history from the hereditary agricultural slave or same slave labour of the south transforming itself into the voluntary contracts to servitude in the north this was added by the poor peasant masses who were ultimately joined the landless labour force.  

The Agriculturalists consisted of two groups. (i) Cultivators (ii) Agricultural laborers. The cultivators include the owner cultivator, the share cropper, the lessee and on the other hand, agricultural labour (landless) has been defined as one who works on another land for wages in cash or kind without supervising or directing the cultivation. The definition of an agricultural labourer includes all types of labourers. It is difficult to differentiate between casual labourer for a particular activity for an entire by specified season. The interesting phenomenon on is that the cultivators belong mostly to the caste Hindu sector, wherein the landless, most probably fall in the category of untouchables such as Pallan, pariahs.

Landless Population

A landless agricultural labourer is a person who works in another person’s land for wages in money, kind or share. Agricultural labour occupies a predominant position in the national economy. 47.5 million labourers in India constitutes 26.33% of the total working Population. Among them 80% belong to scheduled castes and scheduled Tribes.

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6 Ibid.
7 Notes on the Pariahs, Chingleput, Madras, 1891, p.5.
Condition of the Peasants

The kisan is Indian community on his toil depended the country for food, even "the king himself was served by the field".\(^9\) He is simple and unsophisticated. However with the advent of British rule, he has borne a crushing and even growing burden of rents, Illegal exactions and a variety of Cesses.\(^10\) He used to be beaten and ejected from his land and his mud huts.\(^11\) Exploiters surrounded by him for generations. He toiled on land in hot season and cold, night and day like a beast of burden, only to be deprived of his products when the harvest was ready. He got kicks and curses and he won always on empty stomach.\(^12\) In fact on the time of the war of Independence, there was no protection to person or property. A constant fear of the agriculturists was the over assessment and fearing oppression of the Revenue Officials Peasants threw our fertile land which remained uncultivated.\(^13\)

Agricultural Labourers

In the total Indian rural population, agricultural labourers constituted the largest segment. The total population of Madras State excluding Kanyakumari District was 29.3 million in 1951. Out of this the agricultural classes and their dependents numbered 18.5 millions of them 0.56 million belonged to non- cultivating class, while 10.66 million happened to be owner cultivators. The cultivating tenants numbered of whom 2.40 million were landless labourers. A random survey done by the ‘Hindu’ revealed that the total landless labourers had increased from 21.6 million in 1921 had risen to 27.51

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\(^10\) Ibid.
\(^12\) H.D. Malaviya, Land Reforms in India, New Delhi 1954.
million in 1957. It was estimated that in Tamilnadu 30% of labourers were agricultural workers.\textsuperscript{14}

Agricultural labourers who are mostly landless and form a significant section of rural society mainly depend on wage an employment in agriculture. Majority of them belong to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and among the worst exploited section of society. Unlike the industrial workers who are well organized or well paid, their income has always been meager, resulting in poor living with heavy indebtedness.\textsuperscript{15} Before Independence, their position was nothing better than serfs. They were required to do all sort of work from dawn to dusk. They were victims of social discrimination and economic exploitation. The situation has shown some signs of improvement during the last four decades. Though even now they are the poorest and resource less class in rural areas yet they are no longer a victims of extreme form of oppression. But their economic exploitation cannot be ruled out even today. Even now their level of income is extremely low and not sufficient enough to make both ends meet.\textsuperscript{16}

**CHARACTERISTICS AND FEATURES**

Agricultural labours have the following Characteristics;

i) They are unskilled, unorganized and physical labour.

ii) They live a life of object poverty as the wages of these workers are very less than needed for a reasonable minimum standard of living.


\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
iii) Their employment is seasonal. Some landless workers who are attached to particular land-lords get regular work on an annual or seasonal basis. But often their wages are below market wages, they are not free to work elsewhere and are often exploited to the extent that they end up as bonded labour. The working conditions of these labour are very bad.

iv) Their standard of living is very low.

v) They are usually under heavy debt.\(^\text{17}\)

Within Tamil Nadu, Thanjavur had the highest proportion of landless labourers.\(^\text{18}\) For every ten cultivators, there were nine agricultural labourers in Thanjavur. The Census of 1961 reported;’ As most of the cultivators belong to the well-to-do class in this area, in many cases the actual cultivation is done by labourers hired on wage, while the landlords confine their activities to the direction and supervision.\(^\text{19}\) An agricultural labourer in the broad sense is a person who works for wages in Agriculture. A person may be a farmer as well as a wage earner and the inclusion of the person in either of the categories should be substantiated by some norms. The need to study the peasantry in terms of class structure arises for the simple reason, that the village and economy is highly stratified. The agricultural population may be classified into roughly five groups that the landless, petty peasants, small peasants, medium peasants and big peasants.

1. The Landless

The landless group at present includes only those who primarily derive their livelihood from working in agriculture. They are labourers, attached permanent to

\(^\text{17}\) Concise Handbook of Indian Economy Interaction with the world, p.55.
\(^\text{18}\) Census of India, 1961, p.18.
\(^\text{19}\) Ibid.
landlords or as “alvarakarn” (share croppers who receive one portion of produce for every six, retained by the landowners)

In this category, two large groups, of the vanniyars (Naickers, Gounders group) and scheduled caste is found predominantly.

2. Petty Peasants

This second group consists of those who own small bits of land (between land 2.5 acres). Some of the members of the household do day-labour. There are proportionately fever SCA and STD and there are some families in most of the villages who come under this category.

3. Small Peasants

This category consists of those who are self-sufficient, and able to sustain them without even doing coolie work. The household in this category are employers of labour, yet rarely go but as manual labourers themselves in disputes with agricultural labour, about wages they tend to side with the bit farms and land lords rather than with landless.

4. Medium Peasants

They are those who also rely on hired labour for cultivation but who work on only 5 to 10 acres of land and eventless.

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22 S.S. Shivakumar, Agrarian Economy in Tamilnadu’ Economic and Political Weekly, April, p.163.
23 Ibid.
24 Ibid.
5. Big Peasants

They are those who own over 10 acres of land each and cultivate with the help of hired labour. They also lease out some of their land. These peasants enjoy a fatly very good socio-economic level.25

Types of Agricultural Labourers

Agricultural labourers can very broadly be divided into two categories hired labourers and farm servants. Hired labourers are hired by the day on the basis of wage in kind or in money, especially during the busy seasons. Farm servants on the other hand are permanent servants attached to the farm and receiving remuneration on a monthly or annual basis. Such servants can be employed only on the larger farms where the owners or tenants who get them cultivated do not as rule work themselves some of these farm servants permanently attached to the soil are for all practical purposes territorial serfs transferable with the land itself.26 Hired labour can further be divided into two; casual labour and attached or permanent labour broadly casual labourers are those who are employed for rush work to cope with nature’s time schedule for completing agricultural operation, well within the season and attached labourers are those who attend to routine farm operations all the year round. Casual labourers are employed on daily wages (at the market rate) while attached labourers are often employed on contract. A striking difference between the casual and attached labourers is that the farmer enjoyed the freedom to choose their masters as well as jobs, while the latter do not. The casual labourers are hence played in a comparatively better position in respect of bargaining. But the bulk of agricultural labourers in our country are casual labourers as most

labourers prefer individual freedom and higher wage rate to security of job. By the end of the nineteenth century there was the Pannai or home farm cultivated by labourers or Pannaiyals, although it was the least widespread method. Under this system the landlord cultivated this own land by means of hired labourers or Pannaiyals.\(^{27}\) The name Pannaiyal or Padiyal by which the serf were originally called in Tamil districts, is applied to almost all farm servants, probably because of similarity in some respects with the serfs, and that fact has evidently given rise to the belief that all of them are serfs and that fact has evidently given rise to the belief that all of them are serf. Another type of agricultural labour known as the family labour mostly belongs to small farms which are not financially in a position to hire labour except on peak occasion such as transplantation weeding, harvesting, etc., when labour is required abundance and the operations have to be completed in short time, the members of the families offer themselves for work on their farm.\(^{28}\)

**Men and Women Workers**

According to the census of 1931, the ratio of men workers to women workers among the laboring population in cultivation was 8.2 million to 3.3 million.\(^{29}\) Among agricultural labourers proper the number were more or less even, with the women slightly outnumbering the men, 2.54 million women as against 2.51 million men. In economic conditions owner cultivators are not very different from agricultural labourers for it is only the smaller holders who actually work on the farm, and they have as a rule as low incomes as the hired labourers. Men were generally employed for operation which requires strenuous labour such as ploughing, levelling, digging, bonding, etc. Women

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\(^{29}\) *Census of India*, 1931, Vol.1, India Part I, Report Delhi, 1933, p.275.
were employed for transplanting weeding and harvesting. These operations require a large number of hands and females were hence preferred on account of the comparatively lower wage rates. Thus a woman might have five or six other women working alongside of her, in his own fields one day or might work in their fields on subsequent days. It appears likely that the role of women in agriculture has been under estimated. Indeed most of the women in landless labourer families are often so engaged at times when there is no work for men and thus, if need be the men can keep an eye on small children it is undoubtedly a matter of common knowledge in India, that as the material circumstances of a family improve the women folk are relieved of their outdoor work. During the war period in urban areas and possibly in rural areas too, large number of women workers actually withdrew their labour from the competitive field owing to just this phenomenon of an upward alteration in material circumstances by the higher rates of remuneration secured by their men folk in war and industrial work. The remedy for this would appear to be the association of the women folk too in equal partnership with the men in the societies on the number of total workers available. The provision of subsidiary occupation of the women folk, such as, dairying poultry farming, pig keeping, etc also provided them employment and income deriving.

**Women and Children Workers**

They constituted a large chunk of agricultural labour market and female daily labourers often exceeded the male daily labourers in many districts of the State. Except in ploughing, they competed with the males in all other operations. Children or non-adults, both boys and girls of 12 years and below age, were hired as labourers in the rural areas.

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30 Ibid.
of the State. The wages rates of children when paid separately ranged from 1/3 to ½ of the male wages.\textsuperscript{32} For improving the standard of living of these agricultural labourers, the Minimum Wages Act, 1948 was enacted by the Government of India. It was applicable inter alia to employment in agriculture. This act empowered the States to fix the minimum wages for various categories of agricultural workers. The implementation of the Minimum Wages Act, in agriculture was beset with considerable difficulties because of the nature of work, fragmentation of holdings, agricultural labour, vagarious of weather, traditions and customs, lack of adequate organizations among the agricultural labourers and illiteracy among the employers.\textsuperscript{33}

The passing of the Tanjore Pannaiyal Protection Act (1952) and the Tiruchirappalli, Kairenvara and Mattavaramdar Act (1959) constituted the other legislative measures introduced for the regulation of agricultural labourers. On the whole, legislations in this sphere had been ineffective and it had not achieved its objectives. Despite this legislation clashes did occur in the questions of wages in crucial periods of sowing and harvesting.\textsuperscript{34}

\textbf{Farmers Associations}

The farmers also organized associations in Thanjavur. The Thanjavur Land Owning Farmers Association, the East Thanjavur Mirasdars Association and the West Thanjavur Mirasdars Association were noteworthy among them. The association was formed by large landowners to make representations to the government and to reduce the land revenue rates. The head office of the association was at Kumbakonam and it

\textsuperscript{32} Zaidi, A Tryst with Destiny, \textit{A Study of Economic Policy Resolution of INC Passed During 100 years}, New Delhi; Publication Department, 1985, p.103.
\textsuperscript{33} \textit{Handbook of Agriculture}, ICAR, New Delhi, 1987, p.714.
\textsuperscript{34} K.S.Sonachalam, \textit{op.cit.}, New Delhi, 1970, p.66.
envisaged an organizational structure extending up to the villages. The farmers associations centered on certain key individuals, trying mainly to safeguard the interests of large farmers. The associations’ main activities are to conduct legal cases against various land legislations.  

With a view to intimately associate farmers with agricultural improvements, Government ordered the organization of village agricultural associations at the rate of one for every village, and so far about 15,800 such village associations have been organized.

**Female Workers among Agricultural Labourers**

The highest proportion of female workers was recorded in the category of agricultural labourers. There were as many as 96 females for every 100 male workers in this category for the whole State. In the district on North Arcot, there were 133 females per 100 males and in Ramnad and Tirunelveli 126 and 122. Excluding Madras the lowest proportion of female workers in this category was found in Kanyakumari district. The proportion is being 34 females per 100 male workers.

The cultivating tenants are further classified as tenants on hired rent and on valam rent. In 1951, the agriculture classes were distinguished as (i) cultivators of land, wholly or mainly owned and their dependants.(ii) cultivators of land, wholly or mainly unwonted and their dependents (iii) cultivating labourers and their dependents and (iv) non-cultivating owners of lands, argil rent receives and their dependants During 1960, though no such distinctive was made no such details gathered in the individual slip, in the house

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hold schedule which was a new feature, information on the interests in land for cultivating households were gathered under the leadings (1) Land owned or held from Govt. (2) Land held from private persons on institutions for payment in money, kind or share or (3) Land given to private persons for cultivation for payment in money, kind or share.\textsuperscript{38}

**Tenancy Reforms**

In 1948 the Agrarian Reforms committee went into whole question of agrarian reforms suggested that permanent transformable and heritable rights of cultivation should be granted to the tenants object to the condition that (1) they did not subject the land (2) they transferred the right of cultivation to another ace. The well defined priorities among the descendants laid down by law and at a price reasonable and speculative and (3) they conform to the test of good agricultural husbandry and the scheme of a planning prepared by the Government. The Agrarian Reform Committee suggested a drastic reduction of land rent. It recommended that 25\% of the gross produce of the irrigated land might be fixed as rest.\textsuperscript{39}

The Independent India witnessed the enactment of a series of humanitarian reforms Acts. In this regard both the Madras Government and the Central Government enacted a number of Agrarian Acts which gave relief to the peasants. The Government wanted to relieve the peasants from the cruel clutches of land holders and intermediators who exploited the agricultural labourers and poor agriculturists by all possible means through the ages. The political parties particularly, the Congress and Communist parties, made a number of proposals in their election manifestoes for attracting the workers. In

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{39} G.O.No.1563,Revenue Department, dated 26 May 1952.
this spheres, they paid much attention on the agriculturists who constituted 75% of the
technology bank and wanted to get their votes. In order to attract them they placed before a
number of agricultural relief measures.

**Congress and the peasants**

The congress gave priority to the problems of peasants in the struggle for national
liberation it adopted a non-valet and no-tax campaign as part of its Civil Disobedience
Programmes. Under the burden of the Depression, socio economic demands of the
peasants found expression in its Karachi Resolution of 1931. The 20 fundamental objects
of the Congress adopted at the Karachi session included the reduction of land revenue by
50 percent and total relief to small owners. The peasants organized meetings throughout
the Presidency and were demanding reduction of land tax. A resolution passed by the
executive committee of the south Indian Federation of Peasants on the eve of the 1937
election reveals the attitude of the peasants towards the Congress.  

“This federation resolves that in the coming assembly elections the proper and
class-wise course for the peasants to follow is to vote for the congress candidates in
general and to utilize all their organizational and other resources to strengthen those
congress candidates who give their unequivocal assurance of support for implementing of
the peasants charter of minimum demands through their work both within and without the
legislators. In the Madras Presidency the Congress party captured the Government in
1946 General Election and it continued their rule successfully till 1967. Till then the
Congress Government brought out a number of Acts for relieving the burdens of the
agriculturalists. Accordingly the following enactments and their follow up actions gave

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41 Ibid.
reliefs and benefits to the agriculturalists. The exploitation of the tenants and agricultural labourers was general all over ryotwari region. A beginning in tenancy reforms was made in the Thanjavur district, a district, noted for its rich delta regions and large land owners.

**Thanjavur tenants and panniyals protection act, 1952**

The farm labourers were addressed their problems to the government relating to Pannaiyals (farm labourers) in Thanjavur district and certain villages in South Arcot district. Therefore the government provided for enquiries being made into cases of dismissal of Pannaiyals and for the adjudication of other disputes between landlords and Pannaiyals. It also prescribed the wages payable to Pannaiyals and the member of their family. Suitable machinery had been constituted under the Act to adjudicate the dispute with provision for appeal and revision.42

Speaking on the Thanjavur Tenants and Panniyal Protection Act, K.R.Sambandam observed in the assembly that, though many amendments were moved at the time when the bill was considered in this House, the Government were not kind enough to accept them and so we find many handicaps now citing the Section 6 which dealt with the right of cultivating tenants for a period of five years the member complained that the right was given only for those who had applied for tenancy and denied to those who had not applied for it. They asserted that there was no provision in the Act for doing it. Though no harvesting charges could be fixed in the Act, it was stated that the produce had to be divided after deducting all harvesting charges.43

The Tanjore Tenants and Pannayal Protection Act of 1952 was passed to fix rent and wages for the tenants and labourers respectively. As to the Act, the produce at the harvest after

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deducting all harvest charges should be 4 between the landowner and tenant in the ratio of 3:2. The tenant was allowed to retain all the straw after giving the customary need loads to the landowner. On the land the tenant shall give the landowners one fifth of the gross produce of the crop after meeting all cultivation and Marketing charges or any other lower proportion that may be agreed upon.

Adult male workers – Four, Madras Measures of paddy for a day’s work.

Adult women worker – Two, Madras, measures of paddy for a day’s works.

Child worker – one and a half Madras Measures of paddy for a day’s work.

The permanent workers on the farm known as Pannaiyals may also up for payment according to the Agreement (an agreement between land owners and representation of workers on 28th October 1948). Adult workers -2 Madras Measures
Adult female workers-1 ½ Madras Measures, along with these regular wages, a Pannaiyal was to be paid an additional payment of one seventh of the gross produce of the plots of land on which he had worked as Pannaiyal.44 The Tanjore Tenants and Pannaiyal Protection Act of 1952 was applied to Thanjavur district and Chidambaram taluk of South Arcot district. The tenants and workers were left severely alone, the protection of tenants and workers in Tanjavur district the landowners in other districts belong to anticipate similar tenant protection legislation.

The minimum wages act 1948

The farm labourers demanded minimum wages from the landowners. It was implemented in agriculture and other allied items of work.45 This Act was implemented

throughout the State of Tamilnadu, except a few taluks covering East Thanjavur district, where the provisions of the Tamil Nadu Agricultural labourers fair wages Act 1969 were in force. The Regular revenue staffs were made responsible for the implementation of this Act in the Agricultural sector. Disputes on claims under the Act were enquired into and settled by the regular revenue staff authorized in this regard. The minimum rates of wages for employment in agricultural sector were recently revised by the Government from the 3rd April 1989 and they are as given in the Table 4.1 in below.46

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Employee engaged in ploughing with bullocks and plough supplied by him</th>
<th>Rs.32 Per day</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Employee engaged in ploughing with bullocks and not with plough</td>
<td>Rs.16 Per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Employee engaged in harvest of paddy crop reaping, carrying it thrashing area, removing husk, measuring and bagging.</td>
<td>Rs.16 per day or kind.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Employee engaged in harvest of crops of thee work or in a share of 1/8 of the gross yield of produce whichever is higher other than paddy</td>
<td>Rs.16 Per day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Employee engaged in serving plucking weeds, replanting of seedlings</td>
<td>Rs.16 Per day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Employee engaged in other agricultural works namely trimming bounds and fields bee-keeping, poultry farming dairy-farming and climbing of the trees etc.</td>
<td>Rs.15(Plucking and replucking)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Attached labourer / Resident labourer</td>
<td>Rs.375 Per month.47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The agriculturists were paid the wages as fixed by the Collector according to the provision of the Minimum wages Act.48

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Madras cultivating Tenants Protection Act, 1955.

After the passing of the Thanjavur Tenants and Pannaiyal protection Act, 1952 representations were made to the Government that in anticipation of Land Reform Legislation, owners of land in other districts were evicting cultivating tenants with a view to bring the lands under their personal cultivation. The Act’s objective was to prevent large scale eviction and consequent agrarian struggles and breakdown of law and order. This Act provided that no cultivating tenant shall be evicted from his holding during the enforcement of the Act, Except for the nonpayment of rent, doing any act which was injurious to the land, using the land for any purpose other than agriculture or horticulture or denial of the title of the landlord to the land. This act also provided subject to certain conditions for the restoration of an evicted peasant for the resumption of land by a landlord for personal cultivations. The provisions of the Act were invoked to a considerable extent and the cultivating tenants received adequate protection from unjust eviction as a result of the Act.

Commenting on the Madras cultivating Tenants Protection (Amendment) Bill 1955, The Hindu wrote; “This specious attempt to establish party between landlords and tenants by making the contribution of physical labour a sinequa non of personal cultivation owes its inspiration to the Communist members of the committee. It will, beside lead to endless wrangling as to what physical labour is and how much of that would be needed to qualify as adequate contribution definitely load the scales against the owner, however poor he may be. About the same Bill, the Mail observed, Madras

49 Madras Information, 1962, p.28.
50 Ibid.
51 Economic weekly; May 1960, p.771.
52 The Hindu, 22 September 1956.
Government is following a devious course of land reforms making the tenancy laws more complicated. The paper concluded that provisions of the Bill were not fair to land holders.53

Till, 1956 there was no law in the state to regulate the rents payable by cultivating tenants to their land owners and it was a matter of mutual agreement between landlords and tenants. Also the Madras cultivating Tenants Protection Act 1955 had certain loopholes based on this legislation the landlord could by demanding exorbitant rent, subvert the intention of the Act. The loopholes was plugged by the cultivating tenants (Payment of fair rent) Ordinance 1956 which fixe the rates of fair rent payable by tenants as 40 percent 35 percent and 83 percent in respect of the various classes of lands. Tahsildars and District Magistrates have been appointed under the Act as Rent courts and Rent Tribunals respectively for fixing fair rent. The orders of the Tribunal were at the mercy of the landowners, who demanded higher rent from them and enforced it under the contract Act.54

Criticizing the Fair Rent Bill in the State Legislative Assembly, S.P.Adityan made the following statement, ‘the Fair Rent Bill is most unfair, unwarranted, unreasonable and unusual. In fairness, the sooner it is dripped out it better. It is discriminatory illegal and it will impair peaceful co-existence between landlord and tenant and it will seriously interfere with the second Five Year Plan and make it a huge failure.55 The prevalence of feudal land, semi-feudal survivals were butteries by the traditional caste hierarchy which is especially strong in the country side, together with the general condition of which divide. The Adivasi and the Harijan is to the clutches of the money lenders, have

53 The Mail 24 September 1956.
perpetuated the system of bonded labour. The system of bonded-labourers among the landless was continued and that attempted to prevalent in many states of India.\(^{56}\)

After independence there had serious attempts to abolish the bonded labour as it is in human exploitation in nature. A notification abolishing this practice was issued in October 1976. As a consequent of this Act, 2,35,670 bonded labourers were identified and free in various parts of the country up to March 31, 1988.

Under bonded labour systems and individual pledged his own person or a member of his family against a loan could only be rational from the bond and the repayment of the loan. The Bonded Labour Abolition, Act, which was enacted in 1976, was preceded by an ordinance in 1975. The Act defines bonded labourers as any system of forced or partly free labour where a debtor or his family members and obliged became of a loan, to render labour or service to the creditor without wages or for nominated wages. The Act puts an end to the liability of the bonded labourers to repay the debt and bars beyond action for its recovery. The Act also forbade the creditor to accept payment against any bonded debt and from the eviction of the bonded labour from him and all property of the bonded labourers under any mortgage stands Freed.\(^{57}\) In Tamil Nadu, in order to watch the implementation of the scheme of rehabilitation of the freed bonded labourers a co-ordination committee was formed under the President ship of the sub collector consisting of Tahsildar, District Agricultural officer Technical officer (State Bank) and Block Development officer. Based on the committee’s observation and recommendation the State Government had sanctioned financial assistance to the bonded labourers on housing, consumption and subsiding assistance.

\(^{56}\) Utsa Palnaik, Chains of Servitude Bondage and Slavery in India, Madras, 1985, pp.42-45.

Land to the Tiller

Under this policy ownership right in land should go to the persons who work on it as tenant or hired labourers and where should be allowed to own land unless he has also been cultivating it by his personal labour, the effective implementation such a policy will result in the transfer of ownership rights in land from millions of land owners. Studies of landless labourers in Tamil Nadu which belonging to the so called upper castes whose have been traditionally averse to any kind of manual labour. Tenancy arrangements influenced the nature of farming processes to considerable extent. The tenancy arrangements determined the amount of income that went to the tenant vary widely in the impact on the proper organization of the farm. The conversion of tenant to land ownership coupled with technological progress had brought out positive effect in increasing agricultural productivity.

In 1954 the Madras Indebted Agriculturist Temporary Relief Act was brought in to effect to give temporary relief to indebted agriculturists, such as suit against recovery of debt etc. Followed in the Tamil Nadu cultivation Tenants (Payment of Fair Rent) Act 1956, (Tamil Nadu Act XXIV of 1956) as enacted fixing the rates of fair rent payable in respect of the various classes of land as follows (i) wetland 40% (2) wet land supplemented by lift 35% (3) Another land 33%.

Land Reforms

The Madras Land Reforms (Fixation of ceiling on land) Act 1961 fixes a ceiling on the holding of agricultural land and provides for the acquisition of surplus lands. The ceiling area for a person for a family consisting of not more than 5 members is 30

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58 Fort nightly Reports, Document No.4-48, Madras, dated 26.11.48.
59 A collection of Madras, Acts-1956, Madras, Act No.XXIV.
standard acres. For bigger families consisting of more than 5 members and additional 5 standard acres is allowed for each member of a family. This Act gave a rude shock of many land holders who enjoyed more than hundreds of acres of lands for many years.

**Landlord-Landless Relationship**

Tenancy is a process of transition of best landless condition and occupancy. In most of the under developed countries like India, tenancy has been resulted as an outcome of defective agrarian structure. The main occupation of the landless is mostly labour work. Normally they get employment for 3-4 days in a week and only during transplantation and harvest seasons. They were employed 5-6 days in a week. The wage is different for male and female.

- Male Rs.4-5 per day.
- Female Rs.2.50-300 per day.

But during lean month even at a lower rate they were being employed (i.e.Rs.1.50) The unemployment problem was widely prevalent among the landless which led them to spend their time, lavishly by engaging themselves in playing cards, etc. There were neither loans nor savings, made by the landless. However there was no question of self sufficiency since their credit worthiness was almost nil and normally they were not issued with any loans.

These landless also had learned to live accordingly without much loan. During the time of crisis, they world approach their relatives for any small help.

In Hindu caste which formed the basis of social division in traditional India may be renewed as the proto type of a hierarchical system. Caste has been particularity

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61 Fortnightly report No.4-48 Madras, dated 26.11.48.
important in social systems. Centering around the agricultural production especially the control and use of land.\footnote{Ibid.}

In the kind of society the privileged and the deprived had not only different resources and skills but different expectation when social reform measures were introduced the benefits are often siphoned off at the top. It was difficult for such measure its strike roots in a society. Where both the privileged and the under privileged believe that men were born equal and were exercise the rights created by the law was often to challenges the existing order relations.

Within India, there was enormous diversity in the extent of concentration of land and in relations between land owners on the one hand and tenants and agricultural labourers on the other. The land reforms have been designed to bring about some uniformity in tenurial conditions at least within each State of India but the distinction between land owners and the landless continued to be important everywhere. The relation of tenants share croppers and landless labourers to the landlord continued to be governed in many areas by the traditional mark of defense. Social deface in India were no doubt accentuated by the caste system for landowners and the landless generally belonged to the higher and lower castes.

In regard to labour also the caste systems helped to sharpen the distinct behavior. In the case of land owners belonging to the higher castes and other there were ritual sanctions against the use of the plough. At the other end the most physical tasks were the pressure of the lowers among the low, e.i. (Pulls and paraya untouchables in Tamil Nadu.) A little 50% (54% to be exact) of the agricultural population consisted of persons who cultivated their own lands and their dependents. The next largest category was that
of cultivating labourers (28%) lessees and their dependants accounted for 15% of the agric rural population, while 3% were non cultivating owner, rent receivers and their dependants.

The extent of peasant proprietorship in the Deccan division of the west Madras division explained the fact that Deccan division had the largest percentage of 68% under class I and the west Madras division was due to the same factor. The percentage under class IV did not vary appreciably from division to division. The percentage under class I varied from the East Godavari district to 63 in the Visakhapatnam district. It was said that in the East Godavari and west Godavari district, which had very large deltaic areas, cultivable labourers constitute the largest category, viz., 46% and 40% respectively. In the comparable district to Tanjore, which in even more completely deltaic, the cultivable owners was the largest category (37%) and the cultivable labourers formed only 37% of the agricultural population. In the southern division, the most remarkable fact of course was that Tanjore had got the smallest percentage under class I among the Mufassal district. That the more profitable the culturally, the more the temptation to get the lands cultivated by others was borne out by the fact that among the Mufassal in the southern division, Tanjore has been smallest percentage under class I (37%) while chittoor and Ramanathapuram are at the opposite end with 70 and 71% respectively. Tanjore had the largest proportion of delta than any district in the State while Chittoor and Ramanathapuram were dry districts dependant mostly on a precarious rainfall.

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65 Ibid.
Agricultural labourers

In a State in which 42% of the working forces were engaged as cultivators it was not surprising that 18% of the total workers are agricultural labourers. The proportion of agricultural labourers also followed the similar pattern of decline from 1901 to 1951 and steep increase in 1961. In Thanjavur district which was noted for cultivation the bulk of the cultivable land belonged to big mirasdars. As such, the biggest proportion of workers engaged as agricultural labourers, was in this district 32.7% of the total workers of Tanjavur district were agricultural labourers Nilgiri and Kanyakumari had the least proportion of workers in as agricultural laboures with 11% and 8.9% In Thanjavur 36.3% were cultivators and 32.7% were agricultural labourers, while in Salem 54.7% were cultivators and only 12.8% were agricultural labourers.\textsuperscript{66} For every 10 cultivators there are 9 agricultural labourers. As most of the cultivators belonged to the well to-do class in this area, in many cases the actual cultivation was done by labourers hired on wages while the cultivating Mirasdass confined their activities to direction and supervision.

Government Measures Pertaining to Agricultural Labourers

During 1950, the people especially the agriculturists were simple in their ways but most of the riots were indebted to money lender and middlemen. The lower middleclass in the villages was in a state of dependence on the riots. The standard of life in rural areas was very low.\textsuperscript{67} The poor socio-economic condition of agricultural labourers in our country could partly be attributed to factors inheriting in crop production and partly to extraneous factors. Most of the labourers belonged to the depressed class and were illiterate, ignorant and were exploited. Various measures had been taken by the

\textsuperscript{66} Ibid.
Government during the plan period with a view to improving the Socio-economic condition of agricultural labourers. SFDA (Small Farmers Development and MFAL (Marginal Farmer and Agricultural Labourers) were initiated during the Fourth Plan Period with a view to improving the economic condition of the weaker sections and to provide self employment opportunities.  

A series of legislative enactments were initiated soon after the Independence with a view to improving the economic and political position of tenants in relation to their landlords. The First in series was the Tanjore Tenants and Pannaiyal Protection Act of 1952. Then came the Madras cultivating Tenants Protection Act 1955 which reduced the landlords share to 60% of the produce and after that the Madras Cultivating Tenants (Payment of Fair rent) Act, 1956 which reduced it still further to 25% of the produce. The Madras Indebted Agriculturist Temporary Relief Act was brought into effect to give temporary relief to indebted agricultures such as suit against recovery of debt etc.

The material condition of the life of agricultural labourers such as crucial determinants of the persistence of different forms of socio-economic dependence of the agricultural laborer on depends on the empowerment of the village. In terms of per capital household earnings, about 70% of landless agricultural labour households were below the poverty line. The share of earnings from agricultural wages was higher in case of house hold below the poverty line. Even though India got independence, the condition of the agricultural labourers was not liberated from poverty and penury.

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68 Fourth Five Year Plan Report.
69 Andro Beteille, Studies in Agrarian social structure, Delhi, 1974,p.156.
Tenancy Regulation

In 1955, the Madras Government passed the Madras Cultivating Protection Act (Act No.XXV of 1955) was passed to protect the tenants from eviction. In the period of 12 years following the enactment of the Act, there were only 24,555 complaints (3.3% of tenant households) There was about 31% either permanent or tenant cum land owners out of the total number of owner cultivator household. Tenants were quiet poor and free legal advice was not popularized. In 1956, the Madras Cultivating Tenants (Payment of Fair Rent) Act came into force. This law fixed rent at 40% of the normal gross produce of the main and cash crops in the case of wet lands. 35% in wet lands where irrigation was supplemented by lifting water and 33\(\frac{1}{3}\) % in any other class of land, yet we found in 1963 and 1967 and in 1970-71 that the tenants paid 50% of their yield to the land owners for both wet lands and rain fed lands, except in the case of land watered by pump sets where one third was paid to the pump sets, the remaining paddy being divided 50-50.

Bhoodan Movement in Tamilnadu

The land gift movement as it was popularly known, the “Bhoodan Movement” was stated by Acharya Vinoba Bhave with a view to enable the participation of the people of the villages in the re-distribution of land holdings among themselves. It is a voluntary movement directed towards solution of the very vital problem of the rural areas, the problem of the landless, a problem which could not be tackled by the legislative reforms alone. This movement brings into clear focus an entirely new set of values, the use of high moral principles of philanthropy and fellow-feeling leading to the elimination of the social evils, the inequality and exploitation prevalent in the rural

71 Collection off Madras Acts 1955, Madras, Act No.XXV.
Acharya Vinobha have undertook a pilgrimage to Tamil Nadu for nearly 12 months i.e., from 13th May 1956 to 18 April 1957, during the time he induced the big landlords and others for gifting land for the Bhoodhan and Gramdhana movement. This movement had effect throughout Tamilnadu and 48,000 acres of land were secured as Bhoodhan and were distributed to landless labourers throughout Tamil Nadu. Since the cultivating masses were very poor economically, most of the lands so distributed remained low cultivated indefinitely. Considering the peculiar circumstances in which they were placed in life, the government desired to bring all such lands under cultivation.

This movement which began with the collection of gifts of land for the landless was extended to the collection of other gifts so as to supplement land gifts to the peasants. Along with land, such other gifts as wealth, implements for cultivation and services of people were also collected.

Accordingly, the Tamil Nadu Bhoodan Board a statutory body was constituted under the Tamilnadu Bhoodan Yagna Act 1958 to facilitate the donations of the land under the Bhoodan and to administer these lands and also to promote Gramadhan ideology. The head quarters of the Gramadhan Yagna Board (Bhoodan Board) was at Madurai and it was under the administrative control of the special officers in the cadre of Deputy Collector who was having jurisdiction over the entire State.

Gramadhan Movement

Gramadhan Movement was started in 1956. A village or part to it became eligible for Gramadhan, if not less than two third of the number of persons residing and owning

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lands donate all their lands for Gramdhan on it not less than one half of this total extent of
the lands owned by persons residing and owning lands there is donated for Gramadhan.
Accordingly Pattas were issued to the presents.  

This movement in initial stages was directed towards checking the exploitation of
the village by a host of intermediaries and professionals such as traders, money-lenders,
pleaders, etc. It also ultimately aimed at altering the outlook of the villagers which was
basically individualistic and wants to replace it by an approach characterized by social
cohesion and comradeship.  

**Tenancy Reform under Five Year Plans**

The Five Year Plans contributed a major share for the development of peasants’
life. The Government spent largely for the development of not only agriculture but also
agriculturists. In the case of large land owners they were allowed to evict their tenants at
will and bring under the personal cultivation laid up to the ceiling limit to be provided in
the State. It was however emphasized that the tenants on presumable land be given
occupancy rights on payment of prior to be fixed as multiple of the rental value of the
land. There the position of tenants was insecure and precarious.

During Second Plan, it, was found the ignorance on the part of the people of
legislative procedure regarding security of tenure possible lacunae in the law, inadequate
land records and defective administrative arrangements Due to the corrupt revenue
administration, small land owners right was exploited which ultimately resulted in the
eviction of most of the tenants. The various development schemes under the Third Five

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77 Ibid.
79 H.D.Malaviya, Land Reforms in India, New Delhi, 1954, pp.50-94.
Year Plans coupled with the Panchayat Development Programmed generally contributed to the improvement in the economic condition of the agriculturists. The package scheme under the Intensive Agricultural District Programme introduced in Thanjavur district in the fasli 1396 (1959-60), was continued during the year 1964-65 also. Under this scheme credit facilities for purchase of agricultural implements, fertilizers, improved seeds, pesticides, fungicides, etc., were provided to the riots so as to maximize agricultural production, particularly paddy production.  

During the 1965-65, the condition of the agricultural population was generally except in parts of Salem, Dharmapuri, Coimpatore, the Nilgiris, Madarai, Tirunelveli and Kanyakumari district. The various development schemes under the Third Five Year Plan coupled with the activities of panchayat Development Programmes, generally contributed to the improvement in the economic condition of agriculturists. The net area sown during the year 1965-66 was of the order of 59.34 lakh hectares as against 60.30 lakh hectares in the previous year, representing a decrease by 1.6 percent the area under paddy crop in the state declined from 26.26 lakh hectares in 1964-65 to 25.02 lakh hectares in 1965-66.  

The production of rice in 1966-67 showed an increase of 7.6 per cent as compared with that in the previous year. The food grains as a whole (rice millets and other cereals and pulses) showed an increase of 8.7 percent as compared to the corresponding level of production in the previous year. Government advanced Takkavai loans and also loans and subsidies for adopting improved methods of cultivation. The food position in Tamil Nadu was thus not satisfactory. In the fourth Five Year Plan, special schemes for the development of the weaker sections of the community like small

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81 Season and Crop Report 1964-65 (Fasli 1374), p.27.  
Farmers envisaged under the Central Sector with 100% financial assistance from the union Government. Accordingly, three small Farmers Development Agency Projects were sanctioned in the Government order first read above for implementation in South Arcot, Madurai and Tirunelveli districts with the approval of the Government of India.  

Farmers’ training

Under the auspices of the Government of India a training programme for farmers was also carried on the main object of the training was to link up the programme of production inputs with the technical knowledge through organized training programme of institutional field and informal voluntary groups. The three Farmers’ Training Centres at Bhavanisagar, Aduthrai and Navlock in S.V.Nagaram, were orgainsed. Production-cum-Demonstration Training camps, short course for farmers, short course for women, three month’s course for young farmer,s and Demonstration-cum-Discussion groups were imparted in the Centres.

In the year 1970-71, there were six training centers in the State, one each at Bhavanisagar, Ranipet, Aduthurai, Koilpatti, Madura and Tindivanam. In the year 1971-72, 2 more training centres were started at Coimbatore and Lalugu.d. In 1974-75, there were seven centres in the State. The 5 centres located at Ranipet (North Arcot District), Tindivanam (South Arcot District), Koilpatti (Tirunelveli District) Aduthurai (Thanjavur District) and Lalugu (Thiruchirapalli District), were under the Agricultural Department. The other two centres located at Coimbatore and Madurai was under the

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84 G.O.No.1854, Agriculture department 1971, dated 24.06.71.
85 Tamil Nadu State Administration Report for 1968-69, p.159.
88 Tamil Nadu State Administration Report for 1971-72, p.231.
control of the Agricultural University. Short courses for farmers and group discussions
were of great benefit to the participants.\textsuperscript{89}

\textbf{Small farmers’ development agency}

One of the most important projects started by the Government of India in Tamil
Nadu under the IV Five Year Plan was the vital project for the benefit of small farmers
and agricultural labourers in select blocks.\textsuperscript{90} The small Farmers Development Agency
was, first, introduced in three districts—South Arcot, Madurai and Tirunelveli. During
1970-71, the marginal Farmers’ and Agricultural Labourers’ Agency was introduced in
Salem and North Arcot. Later on several other districts were covered by the scheme.\textsuperscript{91}
These agencies enabled the small farmers to obtain loans through cooperative institutions
and undertake better cropping practices and engage themselves in income yielding
subsidiary occupations like dairy farming poultry farming, and sheep rearing.\textsuperscript{92} Further
the scheme for the development of the small farmers, marginal farmers and agricultural
labourers had been extended to the following seven districts during the V Five year Plan
namely Thanjavur, Tiruchyirappalli, Coimbatore, Chingleput, Pudukottai, the Nilgiris
and Kanyakumari District.\textsuperscript{93}

During the past plan periods; various measures undertaken by Government for
providing credit facilities to make permanent improvements to the land, and introduction
of new methods have largely availed of by progressive and viable farmers. Farmers with
margin income and small farmers have to complete with viable farmers in getting these
benefit out of the plan schemes and formulated, it is common knowledge that many of the

\textsuperscript{89} Tamil Nadu State Administration Report for 1974-75, p.193.
\textsuperscript{90} Tamil Nadu State Administration Report for 1974-75, p.220.
\textsuperscript{91} Tamil Arasu, Vol.VI, April 1976, Issue 8, Madras, p.17.
\textsuperscript{92} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{93} Tamil Nadu State Administration Report for 1974-75, p.221.
small farmers and marginal formers could not derive that benefit to the same extent, the viable farmers were able to benefit. In order to see that the small and marginal farmers are also made to enjoy the benefits of the various schemes, it has been considered necessary that some special attention should be paid to these two categories of persons.94

**Land assignment to landlords**

Lands which are granted or disposal by the government either by assignment or by alienation.

Non-valuable lands were assigned only to landless and poor persons who were likely to engage themselves in direct activation.

The land was assigned on free of cost, but the value of trees, wells, etc., was collected by certain important condition subject to which the assignment was made at.

a) The land should be brought under cultivation within three years from the date of assignment.

b) It should not be or should or attenuated for a period of ten years.

c) The land should be cultivated by the assign himself or by members of his family or by hired labour.

All types of valuable lands could also be assigned to discerning landless and poor persons free of cost subject to the condition that the possession of the land was not transferred to any outsider. i.e., to anyone who was not the legal heir of thee assigns.95

Thus the condition of agriculturists particularly the working class in the agriculture sector was pitiable. They were treated like slaves and were fully depending on the mercy of the landlords to make matters worse; caste system pre-dominated the

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95 G.O.No.8, Revenue Department, dated 31 March 1958.
working situation of the labour class and the agricultural labourers mostly belonged to
the depressed class and were subjected to all sorts of harassment and ill-treatment implicated on them by their landholders who mostly belonged to the upper caste people.

The Government efforts to relive the burden of the agricultural community through legislation and judiciary could solve the problems to a certain extents. A serious of land reforms Act extend during the Congress Ministry saved the tenants and agricultural labourers in the eye of the Government but their struggle for livelihood and existence was a continuing one communal riots and conflicts were going on in Madurai, Tanjore, South Arcot, North Arcot and Ramanathapuram Districts in the name of caste, but the real cause was land irrigation problems.