INTRODUCTION
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The aim of this thesis "The Liquor Policy of the British Government in Tamil Nadu - From 1858 to 1947" is to set forth, in the simplest possible way, the various regulations and legislations implemented by the British Government on the liquor items, to raise their revenue and the response of the natives against the policy. Moreover a detailed analysis of the socio-economic impact of the liquor policy of the Government has also been written.

It is one of the least investigated areas not only in the History of Tamil Nadu, but also in the South India. Though certain attempts had been made by some scholars regarding the 'Prohibition Movement', the liquor policy of the British Government remains still unexplored and hence this attempt. The study also offers ample scope for further original research.

PHYSIOGRAPHY

The term ‘Tamil Nadu’ referred in the context of this thesis covered the territories where Tamil was predominantly spoken within the erstwhile Madras Presidency. Tamil Nadu is situated on the southeastern side of the Indian peninsula. It is bound on the east by the Bay of Bengal, in the south by the Indian Ocean, in the west by the Arabian Sea and the states of Travancore and Malabar and in the north by the States of Mysore and Hyderabad. During the period of study, Tamil Nadu comprised of twelve
districts. They were Madras, Chingleput, North Arcot, South Arcot, Tanjore, Tiruchirappalli, Madurai, Ramnad, Tirunelveli, Coimbatore, Salem and the Nilgiris.\(^1\)

The landmass of the state can be divided into two natural divisions: (i) the eastern coastal plain and (ii) the hilly region along the north and the west. The coastal plain is usually subdivided into: (a) the Coromandel plain comprising the districts of Chingelput, South Arcot and North Arcot, (b) the alluvial plain of the Cauvery delta extending over Tanjore and part of Tiruchirappalli districts, and (c) the dry southern plains in Madurai, Ramnad and Tirunelveli districts.\(^2\)

Tamil Nadu is situated between 8° 5' and 13° 35' Northern latitudes and 76° 15' and 80° 0' longitude East of Greenwich.\(^3\) It has an area of 1,30,057 square kilometers.\(^4\) Along the whole length of the western part, at a distance from the sea varying from 80 to 160 km runs the range of the Western Ghats, a steep and rugged mass averaging 1220 metres above the sea level and rising to 2440 metres. The Palghat Gap about 25 km in width is the only marked break in the great maintain wall. To the south of this gap, the range is known as ‘Anaimalai’.\(^5\) On the east are the Palni Hills on which is situated the famous hill station of Kodaikanal. The slopes of the

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1 Abkári Report for 1919-20, Madras, 1920, p 20.
4 Census of India 1991, Directorate of Census Operations, Tamil Nadu.
5 Meaning ‘Elephant Hills’.
Western Ghats are covered with heavy evergreen forests. These slopes are the sources of the rivers Kaveri, Vaigai and Tamraparni. The Nilgiris and the Anaimalai are hill groups with maximum height. In the famous Ootacamund area of the Nilgiris district, the highest peak of Doddabetta is 2640 metres above the sea level.

The so-called Eastern Ghats begin in Orissa and pass through Ganjam district of Orissa and run south west through all the districts lying between Ganjam and Nilgiris plateau. Their elevation is 610 metres on the average and their highest peaks are less than 1830 metres. No river of any importance rises from these ranges in this State.

The rainfall in the region is determined by the southwest monsoon (June to September) and the northeast monsoon (October to December). The northeast monsoon is more important to Tamil Nadu than the southwest. The importance of the northeast monsoon sharply distinguishes the State from the rest of the country where the southwest monsoon plays the major role. The districts of Chingleput, South Arcot, thanjavur, Madurai, Ramanathapuram and Tirunelveli depend mainly on the north east monsoon. The normal rainfall is 1020 to 1140 mm in South Arcot and Thanjavur districts and 760 to 890 mm in others. The districts of North Arcot, Salem, Coimbatore and Tiruchirappalli in the central region depend on both the monsoons (north east and south west) and the rainfall is between 760 to 1020 mm. Nilgiris depends on the south west monsoon with a normal rainfall of 1520 to 1780 mm. The average rainfall in the State varies over a wide range of 640 to 1910 mm per year.
The rivers of the state flow eastward from the Western Ghats and are entirely rain-fed. The perennial rivers are: Palar, Cheyyar, Ponnaiyar, Kaveri, Meyar, Bhavani, Amaravati, Vaigai, Chittar and Tamraparni. The non-perennial rivers are the Vellar, Noyil, Siruliar, Gundar, Vaipar, Valparai and Varshali. The 760 km long Kaveri is the great river of the State. Rising on the Brahmagiri, a hill in Coorg in the Western Ghats, almost near the Arabian Sea, it travels the entire breath of the peninsula and forms a large delta at its mouth in the Thanjavur district before flowing into the Bay of Bengal.

**POLITICAL HISTORY**

Tamil Nadu has a very ancient history that goes back some 6000 years. The state represents the nucleus of Dravidian culture in India, which antedated the Aryan culture by almost a thousand years. It is generally held that the architects of the Indus Valley Civilization of the 4th millennium BC were Dravidians and that at a time anterior to the Aryans, they were spread over the whole of India. With the coming of the Aryans into North India, the Dravidians appear to have been pushed into the south, where they have remained confined. Tamil Nadu, with the other southern States, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Kerala today form the repositories of the Dravidian culture.

The Dravida country, of which modern Tamil Nadu formed a part, was reputedly under three dynasties, Chola, pandya and Chera from the 4th century BC. The Cholas occupied the present Thanjavur and Tiruchirappalli districts and surrounding territories and excelled in military exploits. In the
2nd century BC a Chola prince, Elara, conquered Ceylon (Sri Lanka). The Pandyas excelled in trade and learning. They controlled the districts of Madurai and Tirunelveli and part of South Kerala. A Pandyan King sent an embassy to the Roman Emperor Augustus in the first century BC. The Cheras were powerful on the West Coast in which is, today, Central and North Kerala.

The Pallavas of Kanchi rose to prominence in the 4th century AD and dominated the south for another 400 years. In the sixth century they overran the Chola dominions and carried their arms as far as Ceylon (Sri Lanka). The famous Alvars and Nayanars, sage-poets, flourished during the Pallava era. In the 9th century the last of the Pallavas was defeated by the Cholas who again became a great power in the south.

In the 13th century the Pandyas became dominant. Their kingdom was a great center of international trade. The rise of Vijayanagar spelt the decline of the Pandyas. Vijayanagar ultimately defeated them and their territories were annexed to the Vijayanagar Empire. With the disintegration of the Vijayanagar Empire, Tamil Nadu was parceled out among several petty kings.6

The rise of the Muslim power in India has had its impact on Tamil Nadu, but by and large, Tamil Nadu remained unaffected by the political convulsions in north and central India. With the establishment of the East India Company at Madras in 1639, a new chapter was opened in the history of Tamil Nadu.

By 1801, the whole of Tamil Nadu except certain French and Danish Settlements had been brought under British rule.\(^7\)

People belonged to different ethnic groups had come and settled in Tamil Nadu. The predominant communities in the state were Kallars, Muthurajas, Vanniaras, vellalas, Nadars, Muslims, Dalits and Brahmins. The extension of Vijayanagar rule over Tamil Nadu resulted in the flow of Telugu Reddiyars and Naidus from Andhradesa. Majority of the people were agricultural labourers who did not possess land. They were wholly dependent on daily wages for their livelihood.\(^8\)

**SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

Liquor consumption affects the physical, moral, social and economic condition of the people. Without giving any consideration to the people, the British Government indulged in making revenue from liquor. Though the Company’s rule in India was terminated in 1858, its legacy of profit making was continued under the guise of modernization and temperance. The terminal point of study was 1947, in which year the British Government transferred power to the Indians. But the Government of Tamil Nadu continued the same liquor policy with the object of making revenue.

This study brings out the evils of liquor. The researcher had also brought out the agitation of the people against the liquor policy of the Government. This is a lesson to the present government. The government as

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well as the people should realize the evils of drink and should change their attitude. The people should recognize their needs and work towards raising their standard of living altering their habits for betterment of their lives and families. This study has opened the door for further research in the field.

**METHODOLOGY**

The research methodology used here is both descriptive and interpretative. The aim is to bring about a complete and truthful account of the British Excise administration, the reaction of the people and the impact. This study is mainly based on primary sources and authenticity is confirmed. This objective study makes an emphasis on the problems and suggests solutions.

**SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

The primary sources consist of various of Government Regulations, acts, Reports, Government Orders, Boards Proceedings, Assembly Debates and other Government Publications. These sources are collected from the Tamil Nadu State Archives, Madras. The Administration Reports of the Madras Abkári Report from 1885-86 to 1922-23 gives valuable information regarding the production system, management and financial results. After 1922-23 Abkári Department was changed into Excise Department and hence Administration Report of the Excise Department till 1946-47 serves as a good source. Administration Report of the Madras Presidency from 1925-26 to 1945-47 also serves as a good source of information.

For the Temperance and Prohibition Movements, in addition to the above said sources, the Native News Paper Reports and Prohibition Manuals
also serves as an important source of information. In addition to the above said sources, various other books, journals and articles have served as valuable secondary source of information.

EXPLANATION OF TERMS

A few prefatory words in explanation of some of the expressions commonly used in Tamil Nadu, which are unknown in other parts or have other significations here, will be found useful –

1. In other parts the words ‘excise’ is treated, both in the law and in common parlance, as synonymous with the word ‘abkári’. In Tamil Nadu, on the other hand, ‘excise system’ has a special meaning attached to it. viz., the system under which a still-head duty, determined with reference to strength, is levied on each gallon of liquor issued for consumption from a central or private distillery. It is always carefully distinguished from a farming or renting system under which no such still-head duty is imposed on liquor. In Tamil Nadu, therefore, the word ‘excise’ has a technical, and limited signification. The ‘excise districts’ are those in which the excise system as above described has been introduced.

2. Farms are revenue divisions in hill tracts somewhat larger in extent than the Revenue Inspector’s division.

3. Agency farms are farms in the hill tracts under the Agent to the Governor, as the Collector of the district.

4. A renting system denotes merely a farming system. The words ‘renters’ and ‘farmers’ are identical in sense. Rented or farmed districts, taluks,
or revenue Inspectors' divisions are those in which the right of vend is leased for lump sums for certain periods. The privilege of vend is put up to auction.

5. **Rent area or vend area** denotes an area, generally a Revenue Inspector's division, in which all the shops are sold in one lot under the farming system. The auction purchaser has the exclusive privilege of selling within that area.

6. **Arrack** properly means the spirit distilled from toddy or from grain. As used by the Madras Abkári Department, it means country spirit from whatever material distilled. It is almost entirely distilled from cane sugar, molasses, or jaggari.

7. **Jaggari** is the juice of sugarcane boiled to a point at which it does not crystallize: sugar is the same juice crystallized; an molasses is the refuse or drainings from the crystallization of sugar and resembles treacle. Boiling sweet toddy makes Jaggari, whether drawn from coconut, palmyra, or date palm.

8. **Booth-keeper** – The person holding a licence to open a booth, i.e., a temporary shed in a toddy tope in which tree-foot sales were allowed. The system has recently been abolished all over the Presidency.

9. **Dowl** – The quantity of arrack or toddy, which a shopkeeper is estimated to sell, on which therefore the tax paid by him was calculated. The dowl system has been abolished.

10. **Puttai arrack** – Arrack in the preparation of which *putta*, i.e., the bark of the *Acacia leucophlcea*, is used. The country spirit manufactured
from molasses is called puttai arrack, and the spirit that comes from Colombo is treated as foreign liquor, and is called 'Colombo arrack'.

11. Combined country spirit and toddy-renting system or the joint arrack and toddy-renting system means that under the system the exclusive privilege of manufacturing and vending country spirit and toddy is disposed of conjointly. This is done by auction by the taluk or by the Revenue Inspector's division. The contractors, in some cases, sublet portions of their rent areas, and in others deal directly with shopkeepers.

12. In Tamil Nadu the abkári year corresponds with the financial year as regards arrack, and in respect of toddy it begins from 1st October to suit the toddy season.

CHAPTERISATION

The layout of the thesis depends upon the central theme, the liquor policy, and therefore divided into six chapters excluding the introduction and the conclusion. The vast data and statistics have been used to highlight the effect of the liquor policy on the moral, social and economic life of the people of the then Tamil Nadu. The Introduction deals with the physical features of the study area in relation to Abkári resources, the demographical features taking into account of the consumption of liquor a brief political History, the scope of the study, design and the sources of information.

The first chapter succinctly examines the liquor policy of the Government of Tamil Nadu. To give a historical link and a continuation, the liquor policy of the company is also briefly touched upon. The acts of the
Governor of Fort St. George in council shaped the liquor policy, taking into account of the local needs and situation. As per the policy, the forming system was laid down. In 1808, this forming system had been regulated by laying down that the places at which distillation and sale might take place should be determined by the Collector of the district. In 1864, some further changes had been made. From 1874, what was called, an improved excise system was introduced. In 1886, changes were introduced in the excise system and farming of the toddy and other products.

Chapter-two deals with the manufacture of liquor both by the government and private parties. The items produced were spirit, arrack and toddy. The producers were given licence and government got a lot of amount as fee and tax for the production of liquor. The private distillers amassed huge profit and indeed there was scramble for getting licences. Illicit liquor traffic also flourished side by side. The Abkári department devised ways and means to manipulate production as to increase its revenue. Under popular pressure, in some cases, the government reduced the number of retail shops. But it in no way reduced the quantity of consumption. The government fixed the prices for the various liquor products and distributed the same to the licenced shops. There was government control of prices in retained but seldom it worked. Though there was a government scientific mechanism to check the quality of product often it was subjected to mixing of water and other chemicals.

The third chapter analyse the excise legislations. They are of two types. The first being the administrative acts dealing with the control of the Abkári department - farming, production and distribution. The Abkári Act
of 1852, the Madras Act-III of 1864 and the Madras Act of 1879, laid down strong measures to regulate the liquor distillation and administration. The Madras Abkári Act of 1886, the Madras Abkári Act of 1905, 1913 and the Act of the Madras legislature in 1929 and 1930 dealt with temperance and rigid control on production. In 1937, the Madras legislature under the premiership of Rajaji passed the prohibition Act Madras was the first state in which prohibition was implemented. But it could not sustain for a longer period. Since prohibition was lifted in 1943. This chapter also covers how the various officials had to collect the targeted amount from the retailers. Abkári revenue was the major revenue next to the land revenue. It was very difficult to say what amount of Abkári revenue spent for the development schemes of the state.

The fourth chapter deals with Financial Results. Sources of the Abkári revenue and the various measures taken by the Government to protect the Abkári revenue are dealt in detail. The reasons for not implementing prohibition in all districts are evident from the revenue collections.

Chapter five critically analysis the development of the temperance movement in Tamil Nadu. It gained momentum under the non-cooperation and civil disobedience agitations. It resulted into the introduction of temperance measures in Tamil Nadu. The movement may be said to have been ushered in 1886 when Mr. Mallcaine. In the House of Commons, passed a resolution condemning the excise Administration in India. This resolution charged the government of India with having established a large number of liquor shops in defiance of public opinion. It called upon the government to
reduce the drunkenness in India. This led to the termination of certain general principles in excise policy. But the conflicting interests of the government and public opinion led to the regulation and restrictions for use and production of liquor. At this stage there was no question of total prohibition. The Congress gave a great tempo to temperance movement in 1900. Congress wanted political reforms in temperance. The recommendation of the excise committee in 1905 had some impacts on the pattern of liquor production in Tamil Nadu. But temperance as a people's movement was started from 1920 onwards. Picketing of liquor shops became the policy and practice of the Congress. In 1937, when Congress formed the ministry, prohibition was enforced in Tamil Nadu.

The sixth chapter deals with the Socio-Economic impact of the British liquor policy. The policy affected the people on three levels such as moral, social and economic. The concession given by the government to backward classes for using of the liquor led to the demoralization of family and the social life. The Hindu religion did not allow the caste Hindus to drink but they were not forbidden to produce. The Hindu system allowed the sudra labour class and the tribals to drink, but forbade to manufacture of liquor. Hence the people in the bottom ruined themselves morally, socially and economically. Because of this, the people in the bottom could not claim up the social ladder economically. The government under the guise of getting revenue systematically ruined the depressed classes. At the same time, using of foreign liquor became a passion. In social parties organized by the government, liquor was supplied and the European officials along with the
Hindu counterpart began to use liquor. Hence the policy led to the forbidden caste Hindus to use the liquor also.

Having analyzed the liquor policy of the government and its impact in Tamil Nadu, conclusion is drawn; that the government was more concerned the revenue aspects rather than the moral, social and economic upliftment of people. There was no specific purpose for which the revenue from the Abkári was used. One of the legacies of the British rule in India was that, the inculcation of the drinking habit among the highly placed officials and the rich, irrespective of caste and religion. The effort of the Congress Government of Tamil Nadu to impose prohibition was a short-lived one. Even after independence the congress with great difficulty hold on the tempo of prohibition until 1967. But the Dravidian parties could not keep the tempo and as a result, Tamil Nadu became one of the wet states of India.