INTRODUCTION

Scope and Purpose of the Study

The Cauvery river and its tributaries contributed a lot to the emergence of a farming community in Thanjavur, for which river water is the real source of their collective existence. In fact, the people under this study do not have much knowledge about other professions. In the Post Independent Era, vast transformation has taken between 1947 – 1968 in the agrarian structures of this region on the fields like Irrigation, Land Reform, Technological Transformation, Wage Structure and Agrarian Movement. The present study entitled, *Agrarian Transformation in Thanjavur 1947 – 1968*, aims to find out the problems related to agriculture in the post colonial era such as the problems concerning the farming community, the structure of land, nature of produce, wage structure crisis, exploitation of the agricultural labour class, violation of human rights by the money lenders, effects of Green Revolution and changes in the irrigation field etc.

Objectives of the Study

1. To investigate and evaluate the role of irrigation and other inputs in the productive process.
2. To find out the tenurial conditions and tenancy problem, measures taken by the government and their effect.
3. To foreground the Cauvery Mettur Projects for its role in the existing agricultural situation.
4. To find out the impact of Technological Transformation and High Yielding Varieties.
5. To analyse the wage structure and agreements between landlords and labourers, enquiry commissions and results
6. To probe the labour crisis and their demands.
Hypotheses

1. The study proposes to find out the correlation between agricultural transformation in the study area and settlement of disputes between the state of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu over the distribution of Cauvery waters.
2. It also proposes to find out whether the peaceful relationship between the landlords and tenants was damaged by the spate of legislation on land reforms.
3. The study proposes to find out whether high yielding varieties and technology – aided improvements in agriculture improved the living conditions of the agricultural labourers in the study area.
4. The study proposes to find out whether the wage accords between mirasdars and tenants improved the relationship between cultivators, tenants and agricultural labourers.
5. It also proposes to find out whether the formation of agricultural labour union benefited the farmers of the study area.

Area of Study

Thanjavur, as the study area, has been dubbed as Rice Bowl of Tamil Nadu, and therefore it is necessary to study the living conditions of agricultural labourers and their working conditions. The proposed study has made an attempt to study the transformation in agrarian structure in the early post independent period (1947 - 68) in East Thanjavur, popularly known as Cauvery Delta, which is the central place for the development of agricultural labour movement in Thanjavur region. The measures to be implemented to avoid the labour crisis and remedial measures to avert the problem in future, are consistently focused.

Methodology

The topic chosen for research is interdisciplinary in character, crossing over the borders of History, Economics, Sociology, Politics and Cultural
Anthropology. Naturally the tools employed in the research are complex. Precisely the research methodology is a combination of analytical, historical, socio-metric and anthropological methods.

Limitation

A boundary has been framed to concentrate a depth study only in Cauvery Delta region in Thanjavur district for a constructive study. Further the study encomposes the obligation to survey the agrarian situation in the Post Independent era, starts with 1947 and ends with 1968 Kizhavenmani tragedy. It is humanly impossible to search into every details relating to agriculture and mode of production. Therefore only a selected presentation of the prevailing agrarian condition has been attempted. In short, the study limited in focus on agrarian changes related to the study area alone.

Sources

The study has an empirical, dialectical and analytical method of research, including the interview techniques. The empirical analysis of data fulfils the purpose of research. The primary sources can be classified into archival sources, literary sources and published central and state government documents, including GO's relating to agriculture, irrigation, public works etc. Fortnightly Report, Census Reports, State and District Administration Reports, Manual, Statistical Reports, Acts and Ordinances, Legislative Proceedings, Committee and Commission Reports, Water Dispute Agreements among the states, besides study area records of village, Taluk Office, Block Development Office, District Collectorate, Statistical Office, Secretariat, Tamil Nadu State Archives at Chennai, MIDS (Madras Institute of Development Studies) at Chennai are some of the primary sources. The secondary sources were collected from the leading libraries in Chennai. IMTI office records and Bharathidasan University library.
Summary of Study

Agriculture is primarily a basic and indispensable industry because it provides most of the food stuffs and also some of the raw materials of industry. Further agriculture remains the basis for the development of trade and commerce. In India more than seventy percent of the population are engaged in agriculture and allied industries. Even the developed countries of the world are not exceptional in this condition.

The absence of suitable occupation in other directions during the last 200 years has compelled most of the ever growing population to work on land. Hence, we find the small scattered holdings of peasants who are hardly employed to maximize production and some of the lands are left fallow after a single crop. But this situation faced a tremendous development and advancement in the middle of the 20th century because scientific method of operation came into existence to engineer the agriculture Industry. However, it had negative impact on labour community.

The traditional assemblies of untouchables, in addition to expressing certain internal features of caste, also provided the basis for militant collective action during the early years of struggle. The movement began to advance significantly after 1943, when the Communist Party of India planned to work actively in the area. The untouchables, who formed the bulk of the membership of the Kisan Sabhas, were encouraged to fight for higher wages, rights over the lands they cultivated, ownership over the service grants of land, and other rights from 1947 and the government was repeatedly forced to intervene and work out a compromise agreement between the Mirasdars and the agricultural labour union.

The term Agrarian is used in its wider sense and it relates to land, its management and distribution. It is not used in the more restrictive sense of relating to tenancy which has come to gain currency in popular usage.
Agrarian reform involves mostly two important issues viz.

1. The redistribution of land ownership and 2. Engineering the industry to maximise productivity

The major trends that could be observed in the post independence agrarian order were continuation of trends that had been evident in the late colonial period. First, the phasing out of the Mirasdars continued. Land control became less crucial for them as they successfully established themselves outside agriculture, particularly in trade and services in which opportunities for Indian entrepreneurs expanded after the demise of the colonial state. These activities took many Mirasdars away from their landed property and made them less concerned with the extraction of surplus from it. After 1947, Mirasdars sold considerable portions of their land, allowing new landowners to emerge.

The term Green Revolution is a general one that is applied to successful agricultural experiments in many Third World countries. It is not specific to India. Agricultural change was ‘incremental’ and not radical and rice production rose by almost 60 percent in the 20 years following 1961, partly as a result of an extension in area following new sources of irrigation and multiple cropping, but mostly as a result of higher productivity. The new rice varieties spread throughout the study area, and rapidly supplanted local varieties of paddy seeds and introduced artificial fertilizers and pesticides. It has been suggested that the higher productivity was a result of the development of the new technology in every aspect of agriculture and several mechanized systems from plantation to harvest. Many innovations in paddy cultivation were introduced in Thanjavur under Intensive Agricultural District Programme (IADP) and High Yielding Varieties (HYV) Programme started in 1960 and 1966 respectively. As its immediate goal, these programmes sought to achieve rapid increase in the level of agricultural production through a concentration of financial, technical and administrative resources.
On the other hand, the awareness of Agricultural Labour Unions’ demanded on higher wages and privileges spriled the agriculture. Processions, meetings and strikes at critical periods of agricultural operations were organized to support their claims. Cultivators generally were reluctant to accept the demands of the labourers and as a measure of counteraction, organized themselves and assisted each other in carrying out the agricultural operations.

During the study, period agriculture was very much affected by labour and cultivator problems and hence the government intervened to establish a smooth atmosphere among them by fixing wage rates. But the real income of rural labourers in many parts of the Delta changed little after independence. The proposed research on Thanjavur district would like to establish the correlation between social changes, technological advances, and collective efforts of unionized agricultural labourer, the intervention of the government through Green Revolution as independent variables and the status of the farm labourers as the dependent variable. An attempt may also be made to suggest remedial measures to ensure that the well-meaning governmental initiatives ultimately succeed in establishing the economic and social liberation of farm labourers in the Thanjavur area under study.

Review of Literature

K.C. Alexander in his book *Agrarian Tension in Thanjavur*, succinctly characterized the agrarian relation between the cultivators and labourers as apparently occupational. However, since traditionally the cultivator belonged to higher caste and the labourers to lower caste, the labourer cultivator relationship came to be based on caste considerations. So long as the ideology of the caste predominated, the agricultural labourers and other weaker sections of the society meekly surrendered to the legitimacy of the social system and accepted their degraded status without murmur. As the slogan of egalitarian ideology was raised and the traditional political and economic bases of the society were
questioned, the weaker and neglected sections started agitations for improvements in their socio-economic status.

Saraswathi Menon in her article, *Historical Development of Thanjavur Kisan Movement*, published in the ‘Economic and Political Weekly’, explains the gradual acquisition of land by Brahmins. Changes in the Pannaiyal system of labour, the caste system and strong protests from the agricultural labourers over various ways through which they were suppressed, gave impetus to an aggressive labour movement. In the study area, so many forces were working to use the caste barrier to divide the agrarian masses but it did not serve as an absolute barrier.

Kathleen Gough’s *Rural Change in South East India – 1950 to 1980’s* Study studies only two villages, Kumbepettai and Kirippur.

Marshall Bouton’s *The Sources of Agrarian Radicalism – A Study of Thanjavur District, South India* focuses on the emergence and substance of agrarian radicalism in the district of Thanjavur from 1940-1972.

Andre Beteille in his study, Caste, *Class and Power: Changing Pattern of Stratification in a Tanjore Village*, gives a vivid picture of the changes that have taken place in the pattern of powers and authority related to the relationship between the Brahmins, Non Brahmins and the Adi-Dravidas. Having improved their educational status and political awareness, they are no more considered as the underdogs. Even though they are labourers, they are no more considered as bonded labourers. Their political participation in the affairs of the village is on the increase. Because of this awakening, Brahmins are no longer controlling village economy and do not have political privileges. Their age old monopoly in all spheres of life in villages is crumbling.
K.S. Sonachalam on *Land Reforms in Tamil Nadu*, observes an upward movement in the agrarian hierarchy between 1954 and 1967, with landless becoming tenants or owners, tenants becoming owners and so on.

K.A. Nilakanda Sastri’s *The Colas* gives a detailed account of the history of different tenure systems that prevailed during the times of colas.

K. Kalimuthu, *Colonial Economy and the Lower Peasantry – Tamil Nadu Scene 1801 – 1947*, cover only a part of the Colonial Period.

P.S. Appu in his book, *Land Reforms in India – A Survey of Polity, Legislation and Implementation*, has described the circumstances that were responsible for the evolution of land reform policy. At the time of Independence, one half of the area was covered by the zamindari and the other intermediary tenures. After the abolition of the intermediary interest, the whole country nominally came under ryotwari tenure. But the reality on the ground was different. Though the ryotwari system was supposed to have been one of peasant proprietorship, in actual practice, leasing out of land was widespread in the ryotwari areas like Tamil Nadu. In the erstwhile zamindari area, there had been subleasing. Most of these leases in the ryotwari areas and subleases in Inamdari areas were oral and terminable at will. After Independence, legislation was enacted to provide security of tenure to tenants, ensure fixation of fair rent and encourage conferment of ownership rights on tenants. These are the measures that constitute ‘tenancy reform’. Appu traces out various resolutions passed by the Indian National Congress in Pre and Post Independent India.

K. Veeraiyan’s *Tamil Nadu vivasayigal Iyakkathin Veera Varalaru* and *Sangam Padaitha Sarithiram* have been written only from the angle of a labour leader.
R. Nallakannu’s *Nilapari Nadathiathu yar* has also written from angle of labour leader.

**Chapterization**


In the **Introduction**, purpose of study, objectives, hypotheses, statement of the problem, area of study, limitation, methodology, review of literature are given.

**Profile of the Study Area** forms the first chapter. It deals with the physical structure, irrigation condition and commissions, Cauvery dispute and early history of the area.

**Agrarian Land Reforms** form the second chapter. This chapter covers the agrarian condition of early period and their tenurial condition, settlement of Inams, distribution of land, abolition of intermediaries, land holding pattern, land ceiling act and their effect, tenancy problem and tenant laws and their implications.

**Agrarian Technological Transformation and Agricultural Production** form the third chapter. It deals with genesis of Green Revolution, types of irrigation, problems of irrigation, Intensive Agricultural District Programme, significance of the programme, High Yielding Varieties, mechanized agriculture, Green Revolution and its socio – economic impact.

**Agrarian Wage Structure** forms the fourth chapter and it deals with problems of agricultural labour, need based minimum wage, object of fixing minimum wage, daily wages for men and women, wage discrimination, and wage agreements.
Fifth chapter entitled **Agrarian Movement** it deals with All India Trade Union Congress, position of agricultural labourers, formation of labour union, women reformers, landowners association and their objectives, Poonthazhakudi incident and Kizhavenmani tragedy.

In **Conclusion**, findings are given in a sequential way. The study analysed the transformation in agrarian structure based of the hypotheses framed and its validity are framed. Further it suggests the measures to be implemented to avoid the labour crisis in future for the smooth functioning of agriculture industry.