Chapter I

Introduction

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Introduction

Since the beginning of human existence man has directed his activities towards the earth resources and has used and misused them for his selfish motives. The history of man’s use and misuse of land goes back to pre-history. Man was once a carnivorous hunting animal along with other carnivores in the jungle. The discovery of tools for hunting and farming and fire for cooking food and intercommunication through speech and gestures, early man could establish a greater advantage over the rest. A major revolution came when he tamed wild animals and discovered the mode of cultivation. The beginning of agriculture transformed the life of early man. It meant anchorage for early man to soil. Thus, the land became the bases of all his socio-economic activities and the prime resource.

Land may be regarded as space, surface or room within and upon which life takes place. Land is fixed in quantity and it is indestructible because space cannot be destroyed or increased. The proper use of land was a matter of concern ever in history. For the purpose of proper land utilization, tenancy system was introduced from the very early times. Tenancy system or the land tenure pattern implies a system according to which land is held by an individual or the actual tiller of the soil. Land tenure also refers to the conditions under which land is occupied. Though a comprehensive and specific definition of ‘tenure’ has not been laid
down by any law till date, this term had been in common use everywhere in modern times.\textsuperscript{1} Etymologically, the Latin root of ‘tenure’ is ‘teno’ which means ‘to hold.’ Land tenure, thus, refers to the provisions under which land is held. It includes all the conditions of possession, control, use and occupancy of land by both the landlords and the tenants. In a wider sense, the term signifies much more than the mere ownership rights over the land.\textsuperscript{2}

Land reforms include reforms or improvements in the land tenure system as well as reforms in other supporting institutions which are related to the land and its utilization. Land reforms not only aim at redistribution of terra but also, the reorganization of operational holdings for the optimum utilization of land, honouring the rightful ownership of the actual cultivators, assuring them social justice. It is necessary to abolish the intermediaries and bring the actual cultivator in direct contact with the state for the fulfilment of the above so that a congenial atmosphere could be created in which the cultivator feels sure of reaping the fruits of his hard labour.

Tenancy reforms have been on the agenda of most of the countries from the very early times. Many countries had made several attempts to introduce land reforms in their regions. History gives many instances where the land reforms have been controversial and often accompanied by conflicts and violence. Countries like Imperial China made several unsuccessful attempts to introduce land reforms in the early period. Athenians and the Romans tried
without success to regulate the accumulation of land in a few hands. Many attempts made in earlier times could not produce the anticipated results because of the severe opposition from the vested interests and the reactionary forces. But there are instances of land reform measures that were formulated and implemented with supportive mechanisms. The cases of reasonably effective land reforms introduced in Japan and Taiwan after the Second World War certify this. While cases of land reforms undertaken in normal circumstances generally failed, those with urgency and with the support of the peasantry — who were the potential beneficiaries — produced the expected results. 4

The system of land tenure is the pivot round which many agrarian problems evolve. If the central system is defective, the rest of the associated systems are bound to be defective. The land system is a vital factor which can influence the entire development process in any country. There are many factors that lead to changes in the tenurial system. Usually the tenurial changes are caused by various factors like the migration of the people, changes in the territorial control imposed by the rulers or by the other related factors such as lack of political will, insincerity of the law makers and the like.

Generally, land tenure systems of countries are shaped by historical and evolutionary processes. Social and economic factors induce change in the terms of land tenure. Changes may also be mandated by the state or the sovereign. Land reforms become
significant instruments of transition in a society beset by agrarian crisis and where feudal fetters hold the productive forces in check. There are various factors which influence the processes of development whether the country is agrarian, industrial or agro-industrial. If the structure of the society is agrarian, the land tenure system is bound to be a decisive factor of development. It is difficult to understand the patterning of a pastoral society or an agrarian society without a clear insight into the land tenure systems. Reforms in the field of land tenure are necessary to facilitate a judicious redistribution of land.

**Land Tenure System in India – An Overview**

Scholarly opinions are divided with regard to the question of land ownership in ancient India. Some holds the view that land ownership in India primarily belong to the state while others believe that the private ownership was the tenurial mode in ancient India. Issues mentioned above as well as many other related issues on land in ancient times are subjects of debate among the academic circles in recent times. Ancient texts refer to private ownership of land, though at the same time some texts are found which affirm the existence of state owned or crown owned land. Private ownership was not absolute, natural or universal in early India. It is presumed that land was given higher importance in the life of the people. Land was held in reverence as ‘mother’ or Bhumidevi. It is also a fact that while giving due importance to land, the misuse of land, it seems,
was not a feature of the early period. During the Vedic Age, land was considered to be the property of the community as well as the individual. Hence it was a subject of social concern. While individual private property was widely recognised, it is unlikely that individuals possessed absolute title to their land. The state could confiscate the property of the wicked, for ownership was ultimately based on virtue. At the same time, it was the fundamental responsibility of the state, to give due protection to the *bona fide* property of the individual. Vedic rules prescribe vigilance in the proper upkeep and maintenance of land. Whether the land was owned by the community or the ruler or the individual, the main concern was the judicious distribution of the land among the people.

During the post-Vedic period, the king generally had no right over the land except the right to a share of the produce. The cultivators were regarded as the actual owners of the land. The sovereign took keen interest in protecting the actual cultivators in maintaining their property intact. Under the Muslim rule in India, the assessment of land revenue was more systematized and standardized. Sher Shah started a proper land revenue system which was later completed by Akbar. The zamindars established their suzerainty during the Mughal period. In course of time the zamindars began to act in between the state and the tenants. There prevailed a system by which the right of collecting land revenue was sold out on the basis of public auction to the highest bidder. As and
when the central authority got weakened, the land revenue collection was controlled by the chieftains.

Under the British, the land tenure system was overruled for the benefit of the ruler. The British rulers transformed the entire land systems by introducing their colonial motives in India. Their purpose was to collect the maximum revenue from the land.\(^9\) For the effective functioning of this new system they introduced many changes in the tenurial pattern. The zamindars were given the right of proprietorship over their property. The result was that the zamindars became the landlords and the cultivators were reduced to the position of mere tenants. One of the grave consequences of the British rule was the severe erosion of the right of the peasantry and their virtual extinguishment.\(^10\) During this period the revenue administration came to devote its attention to cadastral survey and settlement, maintenance of elaborate land records and collection of agricultural statistics. The policy of the British was to uphold and preserve the rights of the landlords and the superior tenure holders all over the country. Nothing was done to weaken the landlord’s hold over the land. Even though it had been realized that the agrarian structure hampered agricultural production, the administration turned a blind eye to the inequities perpetrated on the tillers of the soil.\(^11\)

The British land policy in the beginning was meant to remove the restrictive fetters that characterized the earlier European
settlements and at the same time to introduce some flexible conditions of land tenure as might stimulate ‘the employment of British capital, skill and enterprise in the development of the material resources in India.’ Further, they considered land policy as part of the imperial policy designed to develop agricultural produce to feed British industry. The British believed that the traditional control over the land belonged to the *jenmies*. They followed this idea for getting the support of the *jenmies* for their colonial rule in the country. Through this attitude towards the *jenmies*, the British were trying to create a favourable social background in the country for their imperial expansion. They also made use of the *jenmies* as the carriers of the idea of British supremacy over to the peasants.

The main impact of the tenancy reforms during the colonial period was that they did not draw a bold line between different interests but singled out substantial tenants for special protection and devoted less attention to other tenants. The changes in the tenurial system elevated the tenants who held the land directly from the landlords to the position of a new class of landlords. There was no serious change in the condition of the actual tillers of the soil. The British, through their policy reshuffled the upper levels of the tenurial hierarchy and exposed the tenants at the bottom to competition and exploitation. The actual tillers of the soil were
depending upon the land for their livelihood. They were subjected to both traditional as well as colonial exploitations.

The frontline leaders of the Indian freedom struggle felt the need for effective reforms to benefit the actual tenant. The agrarian system at the time of Indian independence was characterized by semi-feudal landlordism. The concentration of land in a few pockets of socially dominant sections and the existence of many landless labourers were matters of their main concern.

There were three main types of land tenures in India on the eve of Indian independence — landlord tenure or *Zamindari* System, independent single tenure or *Ryotwari* System and the joint village or village community or *Mahalwari* community. Under the *Zamindari* System, the land was held by a person who was solely responsible for the payment of land revenue. Actual cultivation was done by the tenants while the land remained under the control of absentee landlords. The landlord simply was the provider of land and the tenants provided all the management and labour. This system was greatly responsible for exploitation of peasants, their oppression and poverty and above all low productivity. It was uneconomic and inefficient in respect of land use. The major defect of the *Zamindari* system was that, it led to breed inefficiencies and inequalities. The landlord was responsible for the payment of land revenue to the state and the actual tiller was not in direct contact with the state.
Under the *Ryotwari* System there was the direct relationship between the state and the tenant (*ryot*), but when it fully developed, *ryots* began to sublet their lands. The major advantage of this system was that there was no sub-infeudation and the cultivator had direct relation with the government. Under this system, the peasant was free to look after his land properly and introduce, if necessary, all possible improvement on it and the magic of property ownership could turn ‘sand into gold.’ This system created an atmosphere of frequent sub-letting of land. The defective method of assessment of land revenue under this system led to the decline of the collective basis of village life which led to the decay of village community.

The Regulation IX of 1833, which was passed during the period of Lord William Bentick, was the basis of *Mahalwari* System. In this system revenue was collected from the village. The individual cultivators were generally responsible for a certain share of the revenue but in the last resort, all the villages were responsible jointly and severally. This system largely prevailed in Punjab, Agra and Awadh. The *Mahalwari* System was an important innovation in the land revenue system under the British rule. It was the recognition of a more subtle form of property right than that of the absolute ownership concept.

As a result of the above factors, India has been facing agrarian crisis under the colonial rule in one form or other. There was the increasing landlessness of the peasants accompanied by frequency of
famines and shortage in the production and supply of food materials. Absentee landlordism was considered as the greatest barrier in the development of the agrarian structure in the country. Important changes have been brought in terms of tenancy and land ownership in the country after independence. The major objectives of the country’s land policy after independence can be classified into two, viz., assuming social justice and inducing economic efficiency. To establish social justice and economic efficiency, a more equitable distribution of land and also a judicious reorganization of the agrarian structure were necessary that might lead to remove the age old institutional defects pertaining to agricultural development.

Independent India continues to remain an agricultural country despite nearly six decades of planning and industrialization. The majority of the population directly or indirectly depends on agriculture. The peasantry constitutes the most important class in this predominantly agrarian country. The agrarian sector caters to multiple functions of crucial importance like providing livelihood to the people and keeping the nutritional as well as the ecological balances. Acceleration in agricultural growth is necessary to keep the basic national indices healthy. Improvements in agriculture influence greater economic growth, sufficient food availability, higher income levels, better health position of the population and ultimately a sustainable development of the country. Generally, both the
agrarian structural models and land tenure systems will have direct bearing on all these factors.

All through the years after Indian independence, land-related issues have been seriously debated upon. Many reforms have been introduced in different Indian states to improve the prevailing agrarian system. Critical interventions in the tenurial system are generally considered instrumental to agrarian reforms. Economic growth and social change cannot be effectively accomplished without addressing the flaws in the land tenure system. Agriculture, being the primary occupation in India, a comprehensive analysis needs to be undertaken to identify the problems related to land. By the time India achieved independence, a strong public opinion had crystallized against the semi-feudal landlordism in order to achieve economic regeneration. In most of the reorganized states, the cry for effective land tenure system was heard.

**Background of the Land Tenure Systems in Early Kerala**

With reference to Kerala, the need for effective tenurial reforms was felt in the Princely States much earlier than that of the other Indian states. There were three territorial segments, Travancore, Cochin and Malabar in early Kerala. The agrarian relations in the region were mixed up with to a greater extent with the caste system that prevailed. It was the ascendancy of the Brahmins to the region that led to the introduction of feudalistic agrarian relations.
The traditional tenurial concept in Kerala was that the landed property was owned by the Brahmins with their ascendancy to Kerala. Historical evidences are sighted by the scholars to prove the assumption that prior to the migration of Brahmins, the land belonged to the lower castes. As the Brahmins were considered superior to others in scholarship, the community below them in rank as well as the sovereigns entrusted the management of the land with them. The Brahmins who administered the land were popularly called *urallors* or trustees of land. Some of the *urallors* in course of time began to oppress the tenants or actual cultivators. This forced the rulers to enact regulations to ensure security to the tenants. This trend in the field of land relations continued in the later years also. By the twelfth century A.D when Brahmin *jenmies* became very powerful, the landlord-tenant relations began to get deteriorated. The land relations in North Kerala underwent changes with the Mysorean interlude.

In early times, landed property in Travancore was under the control of temples and *jenmies* and they enjoyed those lands free of tax and paid only *Rajabhogam* (a tribute or tax) to the ruler in times of emergency. The tenurial system of the state was basically different from that which had existed in other parts of the country. The tenants held their lands on feudal tenure giving an undertaking to their landlords to accept their suzerainty and to defend them against enemies whenever necessary. As mentioned earlier, there emerged a
change in the situation as a result of the ascendancy of Brahmin *jenmies* to the region. The new class of *jenmies* had influenced the feudal population and made them adopt their own customs. By this time the state was almost disintegrated converting the rulers as mere puppets in the hands of the *jenmies* and chieftains.\(^{21}\)

One peculiarity of the land tenure system in early Kerala was that the landlords and the tenants always dwelt in the same agricultural field. Moreover, land tax was never paid directly to the landlord. The system was based on the *Ryotwari* principle, i.e., the principle of direct settlement with individual *ryots*. Land tax as such on a permanent basis began to be collected only by the beginning of the eighteenth century, though the amount collected was very meagre.\(^{22}\)

The rulers of Travancore although remained as passive spectators in the early period, were compelled to incorporate certain innovative changes in the tenurial pattern leading to the emergence of the modern tenurial system. They began to implement land settlements in order to settle uncertainty that prevailed in the agricultural realm. The first settlement was conducted in 1738 during the period of the ruler Marthanda Varma (1729-’58).\(^{23}\)

Colonel Munroe who was appointed by the English East India Company as the Resident of the native state in 1800 initiated steps for more British intervention in the internal administration of the state. Munroe attempted to introduce a system of administration
modelled on that of England and to make Travancore a model state of India with peaceful, progressive and prosperous atmosphere and at the same time introducing measures to inculcate loyalty to the British.\textsuperscript{24}

The British intervention in Travancore compelled the rulers to enter into a series of treaties with them.\textsuperscript{25} As part of the imperialistic endeavour on exploiting Travancore economy through land revenue, the British had initiated changes in the traditional land tenure system. Confiscation of properties of landed magnates and transferring them to government were the regular features of the British policy.\textsuperscript{26} As a result, there was the centralization of landed property under the state. This policy of absorption accelerated the emergence of state as the greatest \textit{jenmie} in the region.\textsuperscript{27} The state became the supreme landlord, with two third of the cultivated area under it. A larger part of the total area of Travancore came under the direct ownership of the state.\textsuperscript{28} Henceforth, the state was in favour of introducing many tenancy reforms. This unprecedented attitude of the Travancore rulers in favour of this change in the tenurial system accelerated the pace of land reforms in this Princely State.

The system of land relations that had existed in Travancore substantially contributed to the progress of the agrarian economy, but certain lapses demanded correction. The powers of the \textit{jenmies} of the \textit{jenmom} lands over the tenants had to be regulated. A similar
situation existed in the matter of the ownership rights of the *sircar* (government) lands. The legislative bodies in Travancore, as well as the rulers, made regulations and amendments from time to time, to rectify such anomalies. All these changes had their effect on Travancore society which was traditionally an agrarian state.

Among the native states of early Kerala, Travancore was in the forefront in incorporating land tenure legislations. One of the earliest Proclamations by the ruler of Travancore for the purpose of tenurial changes was the *Pattom* Proclamation of 1865. It was this Proclamation by the ruler which made the land in Travancore saleable or transferable. This Proclamation was the very beginning of the structural changes in the agrarian system in the state. The marginalized section of the society began to acquire land ownership rights. They began to concentrate on agriculture that led to the development of the state economically and that created an atmosphere of social change in the society. There was also the beginning of a new social order in Travancore as a result of this Proclamation.

The Proclamation of 1865 was subjected to modifications in later years. New reforms were introduced for the purpose of improving the relations between the *jenmies* and the *kudiyans* (tenants). These reforms in Travancore were followed by similar measures in the union of the states of Travancore-Cochin, and later in united Kerala. These changes had long term effects in reducing
the caste and class differences in the state, as well as in the break-up of the age old joint family system. So the legislations related to land tenure had far reaching effects not only on land relations, but also on the social and cultural life of the people of the region. The introduction of various reforms in tenurial relations also signified the recognition of the demands for tenancy rights in Travancore.\textsuperscript{30}

The progressive land tenure policy of Travancore rulers was evident from their encouragement given for the conversion of waste lands into agricultural lands and those lands were given ten years tax exemption for reclamation and other costs.\textsuperscript{31} The tenurial changes that took place in Travancore served to improve the position of tenants and to ensure the distribution of land from the upper castes to the lower strata. This change which was brought about through the changes in the rights of ownership of land later initiated major changes in the socio-economic and political arenas of the state which influenced the nearby states, Cochin and Malabar.

Cochin was the smallest territorial unit in early Kerala. The rulers of Cochin also made attempts to subdue the chiefs and to strengthen the state power, but not at the same extent as in Travancore. The ruler of Cochin issued a Royal Edict in 1863 to prevent the unnecessary eviction of tenants before the stipulated period. But the Royal Edict was not implemented strictly and there was the lack of supportive mechanism for the effective implementation of tenurial changes in the region. In the case of
Malabar, the tenurial system was more complex. The political changes that took place in the region influenced its social life and also the land relations. The British policy of maximization of revenue from land as well as their tenurial policies resulted in agrarian protests in the region fanned by communal feelings. There were the compelling factors for the introduction of tenurial changes in the region.

The changes in land tenure system in these three territorial units have substantially influenced Kerala, at the time of its inception. The transformation that took place in the Travancore society was, to a great extent, the result of the changes in the agrarian systems. The tenurial changes had its effects on the economic life of the people. The changes in the agrarian economy as well as the commercialization of agriculture, both led to a corresponding change in human relations. There were agrarian protests by the peasants in early Kerala but the monarchy in the region favoured meaningful changes in the tenurial pattern. The tenurial changes ultimately gave rise to significant alterations in the social structure in Travancore and also in later Kerala, paving the way for the emergence of a model state.\(^{32}\)

**Importance of the Study**

The land tenure systems in all countries are the products of a long historical process. India is no exception. Tenurial changes were the products of oppression, unrest and outcomes of historical
movements. The Indian peasantry for a long time were under oppressions of landlords and colonial regimes, came to be degraded into slavery, serfdom and let down by the growing pressure of economic and social inequalities. They were a prey to the whims and notions of intermediaries as well. It was at this point, a radical change in the prevalent land tenure system was a necessary factor to play an important role in the rehabilitation of the agricultural economy of independent India. Independent India was predominantly agrarian in nature and when the developmental programmes were embarked on, the Indian leaders felt the need for reforms in the land system and land reform began to assume the importance of an explicit and strategic developmental issue in contemporary history.

The problem of structural organization of the agrarian system can be treated as the foundation of all other reforms. The only way for rectifying the agrarian problem of poverty and farm management is implementing radical, institutional and organizational reforms. In the case of early Kerala, land ownership and cultivation of land went together. Land tenure system that had existed in Travancore had substantially helped the progress of the agrarian economy. The ruling families as well as the legislative bodies in Travancore played a major role in introducing changes in the region. The pressure from the tenants was not less. All these changes had their effect on Travancore society and the later Kerala.
The relevance of the study of the land tenure systems in Travancore would be better understood if a comparative study is made on the socio-economic conditions that exist in other parts of the country. In other parts of India, even today socio-economic disparities exist to a large extent, whereas the situation in Kerala is different. This may be attributed to the enlightened policy pursued by the rulers along with the tenurial changes that were implemented in the state from the very early time.

Land tenure systems have become an important area of concern leading to debate and discourses in recent times. It has been taken up by a good number of scholars for their special studies. Micro level studies have been also taken up by many. The institutions like the Centre for Development Studies and the Kerala State Planning Board have taken up various studies on the impact of land tenure systems. The political impact of the land tenure legislations have been studied by those interested in the political implications of land tenure legislations. The present study is an attempt to focus on the evolution, highlighting the role of administrators in implementing tenancy reforms, the extent of popular pressure for land reforms as well as the economic and socio-cultural impact of land tenure systems in Travancore, and in one sense, an effort to overcome some missing elements on the earlier and recent studies pursued by some professional as well as amateur scholars.
Hypothesis

The importance of land tenure systems in a welfare society was felt by the rulers of the Princely States in Kerala. The Princes were specially admired for their progressive outlook and responsible administration. Feudal landlordism that caused outbursts and uneasiness among the tenants was also a feature of early Kerala. The native rulers of Travancore were awakened to the need for tenancy reforms and the impact was the Proclamation of 1865. This measure of the Travancore ruler can be treated as the basis for the subsequent legislative changes in the area and the impact has been carried to the integrated State of Kerala which was formed in the year 1956. The State of Kerala introduced drastic legislative measures in the field of land ownership rights in 1959. This measure in Kerala influenced the life pattern of the people of the region in the later years.

The highlight of the hypothesis is that the Kerala model of development which has become a popular phenomenon of development in contemporary times had its sound basis in the earlier tenurial changes in the region. Kerala is a state with a high rate of literacy among Indian states. The basis for this higher literacy rate as well as the tremendous educational progress among the middle class population in recent times, ranking the state to the top among the Indian states could be read out as an impact of the land tenure patterns in the erstwhile Travancore, Cochin and Malabar territorial
segments. The tenurial changes affected changes in the economic growth of the middle class population, changes in the agrarian pattern of the region, finally leading to a large scale commercialization of agriculture.

The educational progress of the people of the state as well as improved health condition of the people also can be attributed to the effects of this change in the social set up. The agrarian changes as well as the changes that took place due to the disintegration of the existing joint family system came to a point at which people migrated to new areas in different parts of the state and abroad. As an impact of this migration, now the people from Kerala are working abroad and are earning NRI (Non-Resident Indian) income and investing it in the state. This income from the NRI’s often surpassed the other revenues to the state. It was also the impact of the tenurial changes that created an awakening among all classes of people of Travancore and later Kerala to spread the democratic egalitarian ideas into their minds. The age old economic disparity between the different sections of people in the society was reduced to the minimum due to the changes in the land relations. There was the comparatively peaceful socio-cultural revolution in the region which created minimum tension and sentimental dysfunction among the people. Further, the agrarian reforms helped to reduce the complicated relationship between the landlords and the tenants in the state. The basis of the cultural growth and transformation of the region can also be traced
as the effects of the tenurial change. The socio-political and cultural progress of the state also can be traced back to the structural changes in the land ownership pattern that existed in the state from the very early times.

**Study Area**

The study begins with a prelude to the thesis incorporating the meaning of the terms used in the study, emphasizing the importance of land tenure on the agricultural development that promotes the quality of the population, lifestyle, higher income levels and above all, the socio-cultural development. The study gives an analysis of the land tenure system initiated at the national level since the Vedic times, down through the Muslim period, colonial phase and in Independent India. This is done in order to present a brief outline on the tenurial system of India in yesteryears. In Independent India, agriculture is given a higher priority and the series of Five Year Plans that India launched in the 60’s gave due importance to the improvement of the agrarian sector.

The study is mainly confined to the tenurial systems in the erstwhile Travancore from 1865 to 1959. It was in the year 1865 that a Proclamation was issued by the then Travancore ruler Ayillyam Thirunal, which was the most significant one on the land relations. The present study mainly begins with the Proclamation of Travancore referred to above, the background leading to the Proclamation and the economic and socio-political conditions
prevailing in this Princely State and also in the two other constituent segments (Cochin and Malabar) in modern Kerala.

The study also includes the effects of the Proclamation on the life of the people which further paved the way for the emergence of new class of land owners, new land markets and the expansion of cultivation and change of agrarian practices in the region. The initiative of the erstwhile Travancore rulers ultimately paved the way for the economic, social and cultural progress of the state during their rule and finally resulted in the drastic legislations in land ownership rights in Kerala in 1959.

**Objectives of the Study**

- To examine the background of the tenurial changes in Travancore that led to the decline of *jenmie* system.
- To study the circumstances that led to the *Pattom* Proclamation of 1865 and other subsequent Proclamations in the State.
- To study the progressive nature of the administration of the rulers of Travancore and to analyse the factors at work for their progressive outlook.
- To explore the effects of various legislative measures of the Travancore rulers and to understand how land was transformed into a ‘commodity’ in the market as a result of the tenurial changes.
To enquire into the responses of peasants to various Proclamations and legislative measures introduced by the rulers.

To study about the various factors that influenced the tenurial changes in the country as a whole and the role if any, of landlords and the tenants. The study intends to analyse the nature of the agrarian movements in the region, role of the Indian nationalists and the role of the Planning Commission in suggesting reforms in the tenurial field.

To analyze the nature of the changes affected in the political, economic, social and cultural areas and to examine how this had affected the life of the people of Kerala.

To examine the socio-cultural revolution that took place in the Travancore society as a result of the tenurial changes and how far the concept of welfare state is being realized in later Kerala.

To trace how far the tenurial changes in the native state of Travancore have had an effect on the social and religious reform movements in the State and the progressive land reforms of the first popular government in Kerala in 1957.

To enquire and to understand the various forces which worked for and against the effective implementation of land reforms in later Kerala.
To analyse the impact of the tenurial changes in the State and how far these changes did influence the State of Kerala in the subsequent years – the educational progress of the State, migration of the people, the brain drain and the pre-eminence of Kerala in many sectors etc.

To introduce to the future generations the nature of administration of early Kerala and the factors which contributed to its enlightened nature.

**Methodology**

This study is basically descriptive in nature with an interpretative methodology added to analytical assessment. For the general review of the impact of the land tenure systems in Travancore, all tools of research work- statistical, analytical, field survey and interviews have been applied along with a detailed study on various Legislative Proceedings, Declarations, Official Reports, Documents related to various agitations for tenure reforms etc. Personal interviews were made with those who were directly involved in the process of tenurial change as well as with those who studied the subject. Personal interview was made with Smt. K.R. Gauriamma who was the Revenue Minister of the first popular Ministry in 1957 and also the one who was instrumental in introducing in the Kerala Legislative Assembly, the Kerala Stay of Eviction Proceedings Act, (1957), and the Kerala Agrarian Relations Bill (1959) which formed the basis of the later Kerala Land Reforms Acts in the State.
The study has been developed on the basis of the sources both primary and secondary. Primary sources were available from the Central Archives and Directorate of State Archives, Trivandrum, and the Regional Archives at Ernakulam and Calicut. Most of the original records were collected from the State Archives, Trivandrum. The reports of various Committees and Commissions appointed by the Government of Travancore from time to time, Cover Files and the various Department Files available at the State Archives were also consulted. Proceedings of the Travancore Legislative Assembly, Legislative Council, and those of the Sri Moolam Assembly, Popular Assembly, Sri Chitra State Council were also used. The Regulations and other Acts and Proclamations of Travancore and the various Administrative Reports were also consulted. Secondary sources were collected from various books and other publications.

The study has been further expanded by analyzing factors using the electronic media including internet sources, newspaper reports, commentaries, doctoral dissertations, monographs, field survey etc. The Modern Language Association Handbook for Writers of Research Papers was referred for framing the format of the thesis.

**Review of Literature**

The study is based on an exhaustive examination of authoritative sources, both primary as well as secondary which provided evidences and shed much light on many aspects regarding this study. The archival records which form the main categories of
primary sources are best examples for the official views on various issues like the Cover File which contains the views of Dewan, Sir T. Madhava Row, on the tenures of Travancore in detail. The records Ozhukus (field register) available at the archives give an outline in respect of landed properties in the state. Other records like Ayakettu (permanent records on land settlement) and the Thandapperu Register contained details of land possession and tax of each assignee. There were many records connected with the acquisition of land (Ponnumvila case records) for various developmental projects of the state, that have been used. The Mathilakam records give the details collected from the cadjan (dried leaf of the Palmyra trees) records which were available for reference of the early history of Travancore. Orders or Proclamations issued by the Rajas of Travancore popularly known as neetus were also referred to. The various records of the proceedings of Travancore Legislative Assemblies and Councils available at the Kerala Legislative Assembly Library were also useful. The monographs published by the Centre for Development Studies were also consulted.

Change” were but a few in this regard. The focus of these studies is of a generic nature which is different from the present study. The work edited by Steve Jones, P.C. Joshi and Miguel Murmis’s “Rural Poverty and Agrarian Reforms” was helpful in understanding the agrarian aspects that exist in Asia, Latin America, Africa and Europe.

Scholastic studies in the field of land reforms in the Kerala context include the work of Dr. T.C. Varghese, titled, “Agrarian Change and Economic Consequences: Land Tenures in Kerala, 1850-1960.” The work seeks to identify the link between agrarian structures in the formation of the traditional Kerala society. The work by Dr. P. Radhakrishnan on “Peasant Struggles Land Reforms and Social Change,” examines the case of Malabar between 1836 and 1982. The study is about the historical process of peasant struggles and its connection between land reforms and social change in the Malabar region. Dr. T.K. Oommen’s major work, “From Mobilization to Institutionalization” examines the dynamics of agrarian movement in twentieth century Kerala. He also published various studies connected with the agrarian aspects. “Land Reforms and Socio-Economic Change in Kerala” by Dr. M.A Oommen is important both as a historical survey and as cultural evaluation on the topic. His monograph “A Study on Land Reforms in Kerala” highlights the achievements and shortfalls of land reform legislations in modern Kerala. The work titled “Social Consequences of Agrarian Change” by Dr. Ram Chandran Nair deals with the social transformation
resulting from the impact of agrarian change on the complex social structure of the traditional Travancore Society.

The Association of Peasant Studies at the University of Calicut published a study on, “Agrarian India, Problems and Perspectives.” The work discusses various agrarian aspects by scholars like Dr. K. N. Ganesh, Dr. Ramachandran Nair and others. Dr. K.K.N. Kurup made various studies on the agrarian relations of Malabar. The study by Dr. Rajan Gurukkal, “The Kerala Temple and the Early Medieval Agrarian System” deals with the institutional centrality of the temple in the early Kerala society. Other than these works, the works and articles of Prof. Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai, Dr. P.K. Michael Tharakan, Adv. Harikrishna Iyer, F. Fawcett also need special mention while studying the tenurial system in the region. However, the thrust of these studies is different from the present study.

Works of many scholars like D.D. Kosambi, K. P. Padmanabha Menon, K. A. Neelakanta Sastri, P. Shangoony Menon, R. S. Sharma, Burton Stein, Bipin Chandra, P. K. Balakrishnan, K. K. Kusuman, P. K. Gopalakrishnan, K. N. Panikar, E. M. S. Namboodirippad, Robbin Jeffrey, Ronald J. Herring, K. N. Raj, M. G. S. Narayanan, M. Gangadharan, Kesavan Veluthat, M. T. Narayanan, S. Sivadasan, was but a few which contain various aspects connected with this study. There were many unpublished research works in the different university libraries like, the study on the Socio-economic Consequences of Land Reforms in Kerala by Vimala Shibu, the study
by N. Sasidharan Nair on the History of Social Legislations in Travancore, Agrarian Movements in Travancore by P. N. Mohandas, study on the Evolution of Land Reforms in Travancore’s early period by Noorjam Beevi, Political Agitations in Travancore by P. Sarojini, Jenmie System in Kerala in the 19th century by K.T.Thomas, P. Sureshkumar’s History of Social Legislations of Travancore, were the few among them. But the area of study of these works was different and with a different perspective than the present study.

Other than these, secondary documents like Manuals – Land Revenue Manual of Travancore, State Manual of Travancore (4 volumes), State Manual of Cochin, Malabar District Manual (2 volumes), various Gazetteers, Memoirs, Journals and other historical works available were referred. Various University Libraries like the Kerala University, Mahatma Gandhi University, Calicut University, Madras University, Cochin University, Sree Sankaracharya Sanskrit University, the Public Libraries at Trivandrum and Ernakulam, the AKG Centre Library, Trivandrum, Centre for Development Studies Library, Trivandrum, Kerala Council for Historical Studies Library, Trivandrum, Kerala University History Department Library, Karyavattom, School of Social Sciences Library, Kottayam, the Union Christian College Library, Aluva, as well as many local and regional Libraries were consulted for the study. The present study is mainly based on the tenurial changes which started with the Proclamation
of 1865; its thrust as well as scope and impact were different from the various studies mentioned above.

**Chapterisation**

The study is divided into seven chapters including introduction and conclusion parts.

**Chapter I** is the introductory section which includes a prelude to the thesis, the origin of the term tenure, its meaning and evolution, a brief note on the early Indian tenurial system, the tenurial patterns in early Kerala and a reference to the historic Pattom Proclamation of 1865. The chapter also includes the importance of the study, hypothesis of the thesis, study area, objectives of the study, methodology used along with a survey of the related literature referred and chapter wise content of the thesis and a conclusion part.

**Chapter II** deals with the land tenure systems in early Kerala-Travancore, Cochin and Malabar. A study on the historical background of the land tenure system, its evolution through the years, the colonial impact etc. have been discussed in this chapter. The close similarities between the land tenure system prevailed in Travancore and Cochin along with the dissimilarities which existed in Malabar are also included in it.

**Chapter III** concentrates on the important land tenure legislations in Travancore from 1865 to 1949. Anti imperialistic struggle in the region which took place under the leadership of the
native administrators is also discussed in this chapter. The study examines the circumstances which forced the passing of various legislations, the stringent role of the British colonial authorities in India to transform the tenurial pattern into their advantage and its outcome. The chapter ends with an impact of the land tenurial legislations in Travancore between 1865 and 1949 and how far the tempo was carried over to the next stage and to later Kerala.

**Chapter IV** discusses the legislations on land tenures after the integration of Travancore with Cochin (1949) and beyond. The political turmoil of the post-independence period in the region and the tenurial changes after the formation of Kerala have been examined in a larger socio-political context in this Chapter. The revolutionary tenancy reforms in the State, the attempts by the Planning Commission for the abolition of the intermediaries and other tenancy reforms in the region have been also referred to in the Chapter.

**Chapter V** is about the economic impact of the land tenure legislations on Travancore. It deals with the changes in the ownership of land as a result of the tenurial changes in Travancore and its impact on the economic life of the region which resulted in a new atmosphere of trading activities as well as the economic expansion. The chapter also contains the economy of farm management, the transformation of the economy, commercialization of agriculture etc. The role of the economically and socially weaker
sections and their involvement in the social life and how their temperaments were transformed into peasant’s movements during the period were also included in this chapter.

Chapter VI deals with a study of the socio-cultural significance of the land tenure legislations in Travancore. The Chapter gives details regarding the changes in the tenurial system in Travancore and their impact on the socio-cultural life of Travancore in the later history of Kerala. The various social reform movements sphere headed by the social and religious reformers in the region, the contributions of various forces including the colonialists in spreading the message of social reforms have been examined in this chapter. The chapter examines how the cultural life of Travancore had its intimate association with the land tenure system in the region. The reciprocal relation between the landlord and tenants of erstwhile Kerala is also examined in the Chapter.

The Chapter VII centres on an assessment and conclusion of the study.

Conclusion

The agrarian structure that evolved in early Kerala during the pre-colonial period was different from that during the colonial period. The structural changes of land relations along with the decline of class structure were a notable feature of the period. Various factors have influenced the process of change in Travancore-political, social, economic and the like. Along with this, the intervention on the part
of the government was also there. The rulers of Travancore made timely intervention in the tenurial system of the region. The changes in the tenure systems brought the tenant community in confrontation with the landed magnates and feudal lords. This necessitated the intervention of the governments in tenurial issues in the state. These changes in the land ownership pattern have influenced the economic as well as socio-cultural life of the people. The impact of land tenure systems in Travancore had influenced the other territorial segments like Cochin and Malabar and also the state of Kerala in subsequent years.

It is hoped that the study would be helpful to present a comprehensive idea of the nature, evolution and impact of the land tenure systems in Travancore and also the overall impact of various legislations related to land on the then state of Kerala and contemporary times in general.
Notes and References


5. Atul Kumar Singh., *op.cit.*, p. 42.


12 Misra B.B., *The Indian Middle Class*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, p. 257.


29 Notification of His Highness, the Maharaja of Travancore on 2 June 1865, cited in *Travancore Land Revenue Manual*, Vol.4, p.375.

