Abstract

The structural changes in the land ownership and the changes in the land utilization pattern are the vital factors which decide political, economic and socio-cultural framework in a society. In agrarian societies, the nature and use of land is the prime mover of social changes and its operational pattern determines the quality of that society. The changes in the land utilization pattern leads to a parasitic element into the sphere of agriculture.

Land tenure systems in Indian States are shaped by historical and evolutionary processes. Major changes have been brought in terms of tenancy reforms and land owning patterns in India after independence. Kerala, from the time of the native rulers, was in the forefront in incorporating tenurial changes, among all the Princely States in India. Before the inception of Kerala into a single territorial unit, the rulers of the erstwhile segments, Travancore, Cochin and Malabar, were keen in implementing tenurial charges in the region. But the patterns followed in the three units were peculiar and different from one another.

Among the rulers of erstwhile Princely States in Kerala, Travancore rulers, forged ahead and enforced major tenancy reforms in the region and the best example was the Royal Proclamation of Maharaja Ayilliam Tirunal in 1865, popularly known as the Pattom
Proclamation. The proclamation was unique and noted for its comprehensiveness and radicalism to any, undertaken since that time. This Proclamation and the subsequent legislative measures transformed remarkably the tenurial patterns in the region and produced far reaching impact on the economic and socio-cultural arenas. The transformation which took place in the Travancore society as a result of the agrarian changes continued in the subsequent period in Kerala.

The focus of the present study mainly pertains to the land tenure systems in Travancore from the period of the Proclamation of 1865 to the later tenurial change in Kerala with the passing of the Kerala Agrarian Relations Act (1959) and the subsequent legislative measures. An attempt is made in this study to analyze the dynamics of agrarian transformation in the erstwhile Travancore and to combine it with the sequence of developments in the later Kerala in its formation as an egalitarian society.

**Key words:**