"COLONIAL ECONOMY" and "LAND-OWNERSHIP"

(A.D. 1800-1850)

"Colonial-Economy" restated in plain terms implies "hypothesis of our resources to foster British interests". The revenue-policy of the British Government was necessarily designed and influenced by "Colonial-Economy". It was not favourable to the natives. The worst sufferers were the petty land-owners. Unable to meet the demands they ran into debts. The affluent land-owners exploited the petty land-lords by fishing in troubled waters. "Economic inequality" became more patent. The effects were primarily the deterioration of the economy in general and agrarian economy in particular. Pattern of Landownership under such stresses and strains forms the subject-matter of this chapter.

The Company's economic policy was in the beginning influenced by "Mercantilism". The British-trade with India was monopolistic in character. The effects on the economy of India though adverse, were not pronounced. When the British switched over to "Free-trade", the evil
became pronounced. The economic Crisis that was precipitated it affected 'Monetary Economy' and led to 'Depression' since A.D.1813. 'Recovery' as evidenced by subsequent history was never at sight. The objective of the 'monopolistic out-look' was not only a hunt for a market for British-manufactured goods but also "to secure a supply of Indian-products like spice, finished cotton and Silk-goods which found a ready-market in England and Europe. For more than a century and half, the "Company enjoyed unprecedented dividends".\(^1\) In return, England had very little of economic benefits to offer to India. Hence, precious metals had to be drawn from England to buy Indian goods\(^2\). India's 'Money Economy' was automated. East India-Company was specially authorised to export goods amounting to Rs.30,000 annually.\(^3\) In the decade between A.D.1710 to A.D.1720, the actual export

1. R. Palme Dutt: "India To-day" (Calcutta, July 1983) p.100.

2. Ibid.

of Bullion by the Company averaged to £4,344,000. Between A.D.1747 and A.D.1757, the progress was poor and India began to suffer from shortage of money. 4

The Company became a territorial power in A.D.1757 5. The 'monopoly character' had to be diluted. England had the impact of the "Industrial Revolution". Until this time, Wollen industry became most popular; Cotton Textiles playing a subsidiary role. 6 There arose the need for finding out-lets consequent on the change from "Monopoly Capitalism" to "Free-trade capitalism". The circumstances warranted the creation of a Free-Trade Market in India. India had to become an "Importer of Cotton-goods" losing its position as an "Exporter". 7 Moves were also aheard to break the Company's "Monopoly-Trade". Rival Commercial Companies were highly critical of the 'Monopoly' enjoyed by the British. Parliamentary intervention against the Company's monopoly is also on record. After the Regulating Act of

A.D.1773, individual British-citizens were authorised
to export and the Company's servants were permitted to
import into England all varieties of Commodities.⁸
Rival interests prevailing, the new class of industrial
capitalists united and pressurised parliament to pass
laws abolishing "Company's Monopoly Trading Rights".⁹
The result was the Charter Act of 1813, which blocked
the Company's 'Monopoly Trade' in India. The Charter-
Act of 1833 that followed, instituted checks on the
Monopoly trade of the Company.¹⁰

The 'Free-trade policy' came to the fore
and allowed import of manufactured goods. This also made
India, the target of exploitation by the English Industrial
Capitalists.¹¹ To encourage import of British-goods,
Prohibitive duties were imposed on Indian manufactured
goods. Concomitantly, British industrial commodities
invaded Indian market. In A.D.1820, Hamilton found
India's largest villages as well as cities supplied with
European manufactured goods".¹² Britain supplied forty-two

¹² A. Saradha Raju: Economic Conditions in the Madras
    Presidency 1800-1850 (Madras University, 1945)Pp.146-182.
percent of manufactured imports; Tanjore's textile
exports were ruined. The Parliamentary-Enquiry of
1840 records "While British Cotton and silk-goods imported
into India paid a duty of 3½ % and wollen-goods 2% ;
Indian-goods imported into Britain paid 10 %, Silk-goods
20 % and Wollen-goods 30%". The Tariff-Policy of the
Company completely crippled Indian-economy. Large quan-
tities of gold and silver were no longer imported from
England. This resulted in the shortage of money in
Circulation.

The Financial Policy of the Company too
affected 'Money Economy'. With the assumption of terri-
torial administrative duties, its financial Commitments
increased. It had to meet administrative and war expenses.
A portion of Indian money was transferred to England
(Home-charges). The sources of England's income from
India at this time may be listed as follows:

1. Tributes and Gratuities obtained from Indian-rulers
and potentates in the name of and for East-India-Company.

India" (Economic and Political weekly Vol.XII, No:13,
March 26, 1977) p.545.


2. Taxes raised from the people in the name of and for East-India Company

3. The Profits and Internal trade carried on by the servants of the East-India Company in their own interests

4. Bribes and Gratuities obtained from native-rulers, their relatives and connections who had any dealings with the East-India Company. Part of the money thus raised went to England in the shape of goods purchased from India for sale in England and elsewhere. The rest went in cash.

The Company's trade and investment with China also resulted in a great amount of Bullion being exported from Tamilnadu and West Bengal.

The inevitable result was the 'Depression' that lasted up to A.D.1853. Fall in prices affected the agrarian sector gravely. The government failed

20. Srinivasa Raghavé Iyengar: 'Memorandum on the progress of Madras Presidency during last forty-years of British Administration (Madras 1893) p.27.
to revise its policy to aid recovery. The financial commitments of the Company were too many, that it never took notice of sufferings of the natives of the land.

Money transactions had taken the place of barter. The Company forced the ryots to pay their dues to the Government in cash. Transactions in kind which were popular in the days of the Native Rajas fell into disuse. This revolutionary change caused much distress to the petty land-owners. They were forced to sell their produce at an uneconomic price in order to discharge their monetary obligations to the Government. The petty land-owners could never dream of accumulating the produce and wait for fair prices. The affluent land-lords were able to pay off their Government dues. The policy adopted by the East-India Company, robbed off the accumulated stock of the petty land-lords. Quantitatively the affluent land-lords held larger stocks. 21 "Depression" and the 'Revenue - Policy' of the Government left petty land-owners frustrated.

In A.D.1823, Abbe J.A. Dubois observed that those who held large 'Maneums' on favourable terms alone.

were able to survive. Dalzill in A.D. 1830 said that the "condition of the poor had deteriorated in all the villages except in Cotton-growing villages of Madras". In A.D. 1839-40, a Government officer remarked that there was decline in the position of ordinary ryots in all the districts of the Madras presidency. Of the conditions that prevailed in Tanjore territory we come across with different views. Srinivasa Raghava Iyengar remarks that Tanjore District did not suffer from agricultural depression so much as other districts of the Madras Presidency particularly after A.D. 1836. According to him, this was mainly because of the improvements in irrigation, extension of communications and the growth of export-trade in grain in Madras and Ceylon. The Gazetteer of Southern India also endorses the view that compared to other districts, the people of "Tanjore were in a favourable position".


Such observation suggest that there were material improvements. Communication and Irrigational works conferred benefits. But the claim that the District of Tanjore escaped the impact of the 'Depression' cannot but be admitted without reserve. The Company's attempts to improve communication and irrigational facilities were just sufficient. They did not provide relief to the ryots hard hit by the 'Depression'. As early as A.D.1853, the Collector of Tanjore had realised that it is one of the chief rice-producing centres. The "Depression" in prices affected the District to an extent. The position of the cultivators, in particular deteriorated despite advantages gained by improvements in communication and increase of irrigational facilities. 27

The economic-policy was universally applied. 'Money circulation' in revenue transaction brought unbearable constraints. Prior to the introduction of 'Money economy', revenue was in the form of a share in the produce and the Government officers collected it in kind. This 'Amâni system of Revenue' had been in vogue even after British acquisition of the Tanjore country.28


British treasury also received the dues in kind.\textsuperscript{29} The Mirāṣḍars co-operated with the British also, since the entire revenue went to the 'Sircar'. The Sircar then sold the grain in auction. The competition among merchants helped 'hoarding of grains by few', who made maximum profit out of the accumulated stocks. The equilibrium was kept up, and stability of the economy saved agriculturists at all levels.\textsuperscript{30}

As early as A.D.1803, the Board advised the Collector of Tanjore to make necessary arrangements to collect the 'Rents' in money either with the village in aggregate or with the individual villager.\textsuperscript{31} The experiment commenced in the year A.D.1804, when the system of "Annual rent" was introduced.\textsuperscript{32} "Money rent" was assessed by applying various rates of division and a commutation of price fixed by the Collector in consideration of "provable commercial value" of paddy "at the time and in the ensuing year".\textsuperscript{33} In A.D.1805, the Board


\textsuperscript{31} Tanjore Records. Vol.3179: Letter from Board of Revenue (29.5.1803) pp.196-204. (T.N.A.)


\textsuperscript{33} Tanjore Records. Volume 3180: Letter from the Board of Revenue dated 21.4.1805 pp.11-114(T.N.A.)
reviewed this experiment, and in A.D. 1806, it expressed its satisfaction over "money-rent". The Committee-Report of A.D. 1807 advised the Collector of Tanjore to implement the "Money rent" permanently. The fall in prices that followed and the frequent fluctuations, affected the ryots. The Mirāsdars themselves opposed the introduction. But the Company was firm and between A.D. 1807-1810 prices of paddy fell. The amount that the Mirasdars had to pay was not reduced. The Mirāsdars clamoured for the return to the "Ammāni System". The Government refused to withdraw but was ready for a compromise with the Mirāsdars by promising concessional assessments. Wallace, the Collector in the Quinquennial-assessment period (1810-11 to 1814-15) cajoled the disgruntled Mirāsdars to pay in cash, by conceding some concessions in assessment. This compromise was short-lived. Hepburn, the next collector had to face the disgruntled Mirāsdars again during the Quinquennial assessment in 1815-1820.

The pressure mounted to such heights that Cotton, the collector who succeeded went to the extent of suggesting to the Board of Revenue a reversion to "Grain rent". The Board suggested to the collector that 'Grain rent' could be followed for a short-period. The Collector who acted accordingly, had to adopt coercive measures to switch over to 'Money economy'.

Out of the total revenue-paying villages of 4720, about 4203 were brought into 'money rents' permanently. The rigidity with which the Government adopted the policy intensified the effects of the 'Depression'.

Seasonal variations was a factor that influenced price. Had the economy remained balanced and free from deflation, the ryots could have borne the effects of seasonal changes. When the economy was off its wheels with the baneful effects of deflation, even minor seasonal changes affected the ryots considerably. Tanjore being in the deltaic area, heavy rains will often flood the fields. Shortage of rain often resulted in drought. If the neighbouring districts had the good fortune of enjoying decent rainfall, demand for Tanjore-rice

from the neighbouring areas touched the lowest ebb.
This gravely affected prices and the downward trend
was difficult to salvage. 40 When Tanjore faced
drought and the neighbouring villages too faced drought,
the results were equally disastrous on Tanjore economy.
It was given only to the most affluent Mirasdars to meet
such grave situations. 41 The basic adverse factor that
affected Tanjore economy most, was the introduction of
'Money economy'.

'Intensity of Fluctuation of Prices' that
threw the economy out of balance can be adjudged by
evidences at our command. Price fluctuations in the
years between A.D.1808 and A.D.1810 were as follows. 42

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEARS</th>
<th>CURRENT PRICE OF THE GRAIN PER CULLUM</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1808</td>
<td>₹5. 0  As. 11  Ps. 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1809</td>
<td>₹5. 0  As. 8  Ps. 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1810</td>
<td>₹5. 0  As. 8  Ps. 9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

40. Tanjore Records Vol.3208: Letter of Collector Harris
dated 9.2.1802, p.146 T.N.A.
41. Ibid.,
Revenue records datable between A.D.1814 and 1816 refer to price fluctuations, but they do not provide statistical details. A Revenue-Record of A.D.1816 speaks of the disgruntled attitude of Mirâsdars in about one-thousand six-hundred ninety-eight villages as a consequence of fall in prices. Another Revenue-record of A.D.1818 refers to the decrease of revenue of pagodas to the extent of 44907-23.12. The Chart given in the Appendix clearly proves the fact that Tanjore experienced the severest depression in the years between A.D.1834 and 1854. In total disregard of the reality of the situation the land-revenue was set high to almost penal-rates. The injurious effects of high-rates of assessment on ryots were apparent from the beginning of the Nineteenth century.

As early as A.D.1795, Munro wrote against the oppressive method of British-taxation. Bishop-Heber in 1826 wrote "Neither native nor European agriculture, I think, can thrive at present rates of taxation. Half

43. Proceedings of the Board of Revenue dated 5,8,1816, Letter from Revenue Board to government (Vol.726) p.9186(T.N.A.)


45. Appendix.No. II

the gross-produce of the soil is demanded by Government".\textsuperscript{48} Thompson and Garret record: "The history of pre-mutiny assessment is a large series of unsuccessful efforts to extract an economic-rent which was frequently identified with net produce. In Madras and Bombay, the original assessments were usually based on four-fifths of the estimated net produce".\textsuperscript{49} The British officer Dr. Harold-Mann, (1921) said "A complete change came after the British Conquest, what in 1823, an almost unheard of revenue was collected".\textsuperscript{50} Thackrey, the collector of Tanjore in A.D.1817 reported that the worst condition of the poorer ryots in Tanjore-District was mainly due to the Company's policy of "over-assessment" and "Inequitable assessment". His successor A.D.Campbell in 1828, remarked that in the case of middle-ranked ryots in Tanjore district, their condition was so precarious that the least misfortune reduced them to ruin.\textsuperscript{51}


\textsuperscript{50} R.Palme Dutt: Op.Cit., p.225. (Quoted)

The Company adopted the revenue-rates already in vogue, and the exactions already instituted by native governments were also by nature "extreme and extortinate". The 'Nabob' collected 50% of the gross-produce as Sircār's share and the "Vāram" allowed to the peasants was 41%. The Government's share during the time of Amārsingh and Tuljāji was not less. The Company in 1800 collected 60% of the gross-produce in 'Piśānam' and 55% in 'Kār' season. These exhorbitant rates are condemned by "Jamābandhi Reports" - The Report of Fašli 1215 (A.D.1806) accuses that the 'rates' are indiscriminate. The "Committee-Report" (1807) says that in fixing the revenue-assessments, the early collectors had not taken into consideration the factors of fertility of the soil, seasonal changes, means of irrigation, alternation of produce and fluctuation of price. This

54. Wallace Report: (1.5.1805), p.34.
Committee recommended some reductions in assessment.
The rigidity with which the revenue-policy was enforced, caused distress, distrust and disappointment. Violations, Protests and Reactions were inevitable results.

In A.D.1819-'20 the Mirāsdārs of Tanjore refused to reap the produce. The "Purakudis" were prevented from cultivating lands. 57 "In A.D.1827 the Mirāsdars of Śīrkāli district deliberately neglected agricultural operations in order to reduce the quantum of revenue to the Government. This action failed to bring about desirable impact on the government. They refused to repair a breach in the Dam that supplied water to the tank. 58 In the year A.D.1832, due to shortage of rain, about three-hundred and ninety-two villages of the Tanjore District were affected. The ryots of the villages demanded that assessment be on the basis of the actual produce of the crops. The Government turned down the request, and the ryots refused to cut crops. The 'protest' however, failed to achieve the object. 59 On another occasion a similar incident had

58. Ibid.
been reported from Māyavaram Taluk (A.D.1837). Here the
servants of the Sircār attempted to cut crops themselves
and this resulted in a scuffle. With the intervention
of the collector, the matter was amicably settled.\textsuperscript{60}

In A.D.1838 excess rain spoiled crops. A fall in prices
followed, prices of grain being 28% lower than that of
the previous year.\textsuperscript{61} The Revenue authorities collected
from the ryots the maximum possible. The revenue-demand
and revenue-collected were as follows: \textsuperscript{62}

\[
\begin{array}{l}
\text{Total Demand} : 3705158 - 12 - 5 \\
\text{Collection of Revenue} : 3628396 - 13 - 6 \\
\text{Arrears} : 76761 - 14 - 4
\end{array}
\]

subsequent collections Rs.51076 - 12 - 3.

Balance 25685 - 2 - 8

(Small amount of arrears may be noted)

Affected by failure of monsoon, the ryots
in the Taluks of Tiruvādi, Tiruvalore and Tiruththuraipoondi

60. \textit{Proceedings of the Board of Revenue} dated 9.11.1837
\textit{Jumma for Mayavaram Division submitted to the principal
Collector, Tanjore} (Vol.1582) p.14636(T.N.A.)

61. \textit{Proceedings of the Board of Revenue} dated 27-9-1838
\textit{Letter from the collector of Tanjore reporting the
settlement of Land Revenue of the district for Fusly
1247} (Vol.1627) p.12634.(T.N.A.)

demand remission (1840), the irritated government enhanced the revenue demands. In A.D. 1843, many mirāsdars were affected by declining prices. They had to inevitably reduce the area of cultivation to be brought under the plough. Affected by floods, ploughing and reviving soil-fertility involved more expenditure. The extra-expenditure was too much of a burden for the poor land-lords. The Government did not extend any support to them. Large areas in the District remained uncultivated. In the revenue history of Tanjore-District, during the first-half of the nineteenth-century, the ryots experienced unsympathetic non-cooperation of the Government. The petty landowners were impoverished. Confrontations between ryots and Government were frequent and the 'Jumma' fell into arrears. The Company's Government resorted to extortion and torture. "The Modus-operandi of revenue-collection was oppressive than the assessment". Varieties of tortures adopted by the revenue-officials and their servants were horrific. They were all


executed by native-officials! The British officers supervised the operations.  

'Torture' and 'Extortion' are not innovations. They have been adopted by native rulers too. There were also cases of forcible seizure of goods from the peasants. Revenue officials were authorised to "punish and confine the ryots in the village in collection of revenue". They were also permitted to coerce the ryot and to take from the ryot all that he possessed. Such authority had been indiscriminately used by the officials concerned. The victims of such torture were the poor landlords. Even landlords worth some property above sustenance level were not spared. In the Review of the Report, the Commissioners admit that the affected persons were the "lower order of the ryots and in some cases medium sized owners".


66. K.Rajayyan: "Administration and Society in the Carnatic (1701-1801) (Venketeswara University, Tiruppathi 1966) p.36.


69. *Torture Commission Report*, p.25 The victim Subbarayarapillai of Kumbakonam in this case owned Lands and revenue paid by him was Rs.240/-.

70. Ibid.,
Commission Report records "The great body of ryots is not in the state of ease and security in which the justice and policy of British Government mean to place them. In general, the ryots submit to oppression and pay what is demanded from them by a person in power, rather than to have recourse to the tedious, expensive and uncertain process of law-suit. They are also so poor as averse to forms, new institutions and intricate mode of procedure. They are also timid and simple." 71

The less fortunate land-owners had no other recourse but to borrow money from the usurers and principal land-owners of the District. It was at this time that the Company was experimenting in evolving its own pattern of land-ownership with the objective of fixing individual liability on proprietary rights by transforming the communal-ownership of land. Such attempts quickened the process of degeneration. The ryots had to borrow heavily from sources which were waiting for opportunities of exploitation. 72 Under Communal-ownership, land could not


serve as security for sale or mortgage by an individual as it was difficult to get the consent of the Community. The situation in Tanjore was that 'Communal ownership' had not been completely annihilated. In one form or other it continued to linger in all the categories of ownership mainly Samudhāyam, Palabhōgam and Ėkabhōgam, even during Company's administration.  

The Company's earliest attempt to usher in "individual liability" dates back to A.D.1803. Attempts were made to issue 'Pattas' for individual Mirāsdārs. Meeting with reverses initially, in A.D.1807, the traditional system of 'Village rent' was revived. The Company, however was keen on fixing individual liability on ownership. In A.D.1822, the "dream was realised", and the Company succeeded, though the scheme received

74. Tanjore Records: Vol. No:3179 : Letter from the Board of Revenue dt.8.7.1803, pp.150-173 (T.N.A.)
75. Committee Report (1807) Pp.3 - 5
full recognition only after A.D.1865. The Government entrusted the defaulters of revenue to individuals who found no difficulty in bringing the lands of the defaulters for sales or mortgages in order to recover arrears of revenue.

The 'Colonial economy' doomed the less fortunate land-owners to ruin, but it proved to be a boon to the principal land-owners and money-lenders. At the cost of the struggling land-lords, principal land-owners and money-lenders enriched themselves. This resulted in "a remarkable increase in indebtedness during Company's rule". In Tanjore district, as evidenced by available records, the exploitation of the less fortunate was by bigger land-owners and money-lenders. The timid and poor ryots meekly submitted. As early as A.D.1799, the "monopoly land-owners with the help of Kāvalgārs advanced loans to lesser landowners and would never demand repayment until the small cultivators would reach the stage of alienating their lands to themselves for their debt".

The "Settlement Reports", chronologically of later date endorse that the Mirāśdārs had the habit of "tapping the timid ryots into their garb of usury by using their tyranny and various foul plays." 79 The complaints given by the lesser Mirāśdārs of a village called 'Coravapollum' to collector Nelson re-affirm the claim. 80 Large-scale appropriations by powerful Mirāśdārs over lesser bretheren are also on record. Collector A.D. Campbell said: "One single mirāśdār appeared before me and publically claimed a right to be "A" in one village; "B" in another village and "C" in a third village". 81

Obviously, the worst sufferers were the petty land-owners. Speaking of their condition (1830-1850) Bourdalin says that "the worst sufferers were the petty land-owners". 82 Affluent land-holders and those who held Inām (rent-free) lands escaped the effects of the economic


80. Ibid.,

81. Ibid.

crisis. Some held land on easier terms and they belonged to "preferred castes". Affluent land-holders were numerically small. Among the small agriculturists, those whose net-income was between Rs. 30 to Rs. 50 per month did not suffer much. But the condition of a vast majority was worse. In A.D. 1853, the Collector of Tanjore made the following observation. "The position of cultivators deteriorated during this period of depression inspite of the advantages conferred on it". In the very next year (1854) Forbes, the Collector of Tanjore said "There remained no gold ornaments or brass-pots among the common ryots". The 'Economic-inequality' that prevailed among land-owners is patently brought out by such observations. The settlement Reports of Fasly 1258 and 1259 (i.e. 1849, 1850) give the information that the total number of "Pattadhrs" were 95779 and they paid a total revenue of Rs. 387,3870. About twenty-one principal land owners

83. Ibid.


86. Proceeding of the Board of Revenue No. 79 from the Acting Collector of Tanjore to the Board of Revenue Bd. No. 2885) submitting annual accounts for the settlement of Tanjore for Fasly 1260 (1850-51) (Vol. 2310) Pp. 16208 and 16217 (T.N.A.)
alone paid Rs.202,170. This amounts to 5% of the total revenue.

Details of the Principal land-owner's rent in the year 1849 are as follows. 87

**TABLE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tables</th>
<th>Amount of Kist Paid</th>
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<tr>
<td>Pāpanāsam</td>
<td>Cabistalam Chandracausa Moopen</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Appaswamy Vandaiyan of poondy</td>
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<td>Sinneya Taver of Wookady</td>
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<td>Tīruvalore</td>
<td>Chookkappa Modelly of Vadapathi Manglam</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Choekkummal of Coolikary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Keevalore</td>
<td>Canagasabay pillai of Mohanloor</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teyagarajah Modelly, Teyagasumunda Modelly of Nagore</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tētrapoonudy</td>
<td>Samy Modelly of Nadumbell</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ramalina Modelly of Kodyvenoyaga N Nellore</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mānārgoody</td>
<td>Seenevasa Row of Paroovalendam</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ramoovien of Agrarum</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cōotālam</td>
<td>Iyaroo pillay of Anacoody</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chendrasekara Pillay of Moolagoody</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Tiruvosadoctoray Madam</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anna Sastry of Abiramapuram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combacōnam</td>
<td>Chokalinga Tambiram of Tīruperundal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pōorellun</td>
<td>Anayappiah of Piloor</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Soobroya Modelly of Karuppur</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>202172-4-11</strong></td>
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</tbody>
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Persons 21.

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The Settlement Report of A.D.1853 informs us that in every village, the lands owned by principal landowners were larger in extent. In the whole district estate-owners like Kapistalam Chandrahäsa Mooppanar owned lands more than 700 Vells (4500 acres)\(^8\). The 'Rent-Roll' of the Report furnishes information of the position of different kinds of land owners.\(^9\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pattas</th>
<th>Percentage to the total Pattādars</th>
<th>Amount of Assessment</th>
<th>Percentage of the Total Revenue</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ryots paying Rs. 1000 and above</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>263</td>
<td>0.025</td>
<td>438476</td>
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<td>&quot; &quot; 500-1000</td>
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<td>12.3</td>
<td>359901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot; &quot; 10-30</td>
<td>19452</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>407138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot; below 10</td>
<td>49815</td>
<td>49.8</td>
<td>159160</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Pattas 99885 4059237

Joint Pattas 1140 78822

\(^8\) Proceedings of the Board of Revenue No.57 from the Collector of Tanjore to the Acting Secretary Board of Revenue regarding settlement of Land Revenue for Fasīl 1263 (1853-54) (Vol.2460) p.3207. T.N.A.

\(^9\) Ibid., Rent Roll. p.3346.
The Chart proves that about 263 or 0.025% of the total number of Pattadhars owned lands that fetched a revenue of Rs.438476 to the Government. This amounts to 10.8% of the total revenue. Pattadhārs numbering 49815, that is 49.8% of Pattadhārs paid a revenue of Rs.1,59,160, which amounted to 4% of the total revenue.

The British administration, obviously had not bridged 'Economic inequality'. On the otherhand, its policies not only perpetuated the inequalities, but also intensified the effects. As evidenced by the settlement Reports, more than half of the lands were owned by a few and the rest were owned by a large number of landowners in pieces. "Landless agricultural labour had also increased. The affluent land-owners wanted to keep the less fortunate perpetually obliged to them. The British administration did not take cognizance of this avoidable economic calamity. They were nervous to tamper the natural course of events since they were afraid of losing revenue. The 'complex socio-economic structure' with cultivating and non-cultivating owners, Tenancy-cultivation, and Agrestic servitude was subjected to more stresses and strains. Process of diffusion of land-ownership from 'Monopoly' to "Small pieces" and distribution to all communities was latent. The dominance of Vellālas and Brahmins and land-owners remained. The
"Untouchables" had no chance of owning lands. Even as late as A.D.1871, the situation did not alter.

We notice a vertical division of 'Cultivating' and 'Non-Cultivating' owners. The "Cultivating land owners" were 'Petty land-owners' owning small pieces of land (owner-cultivators). They cultivated their own lands with the help of the share-croppers or agricultural labourers. In agricultural operations, their family members assisted them. In agricultural society, their status was equal to that of tenants. The policies of the British affected them very much. At times of economic crisis or failure of monsoons, they were to loose the lands. Petty-landowners invariably occupied upland areas of the South-West parts of the District.

The influential and powerful members of the agrarian community were the Non-cultivating owners. This included the principal land-owners, zamindars, Ināmdars, temples, maths and few medium-sized land-owners. Their origins and growth had already been traced. Since the British policies encouraged their growth, they continued to own extensive areas of land. Their lands were cultivated either by landless people of Vāramdars (Tenants) or agricultural slaves. These land-owners are also called "Absentee landowners". They formed a "leisurely Class". They led a life of ease and "enjoyed the fruits
of the labour of others". The statistical data available to us regarding Cultivating and Non-cultivating owners are as follows\(^ {90} (1853)\).

1. Total number of Pattâdars 101025
2. Those who pay a rent of Rs.30 and below 60267
3. Those who pay the rent of Rs.30 and above 40758

From Census particulars available to us from the settlement-Reports (1805-51), it is known that out of the total population of 167, 6086, those who were concerned with agriculture numbered 1045058. Out of these, about one lakh were landed Pattâdhrs ranging from petty land-owners to principal land-owners. The rest of the population should have consisted of agricultural labourers or tenant-cultivators.

The figures given in the Table below give us a picture of agricultural and non-agricultural class.\(^ {91} \)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agriculture class</th>
<th>Non-agriculture class</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hindu</td>
<td>983493</td>
<td>554,698</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims and non-Hindus</td>
<td>61565</td>
<td>76,330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1045058</strong></td>
<td><strong>631,028</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The total number of Pattâdhrs is 97,281.

\(^ {90} \) Proceedings of the Board of Revenue. (Vol. 2460) op.cit. pp. 3207 and 3346.

"Vāramidars" and agricultural slaves, extensively prevalent in almost all the villages, led miserable lives. The economic status of Vāramidars was however a little higher than the slaves. Wallace Report states "Vāram", or a system of sharing was found in the District among inferior class of Śūdras devoted to the business of agriculture. 92 The land-owners of this period encouraged both the "Uḷkudivāram" (Resident Pycaries) and "Purakudi Vāram" (Non-resident Pycaries), legacies of the Maratha rule. The terms and their application varies from time to time and place to place. 'Seasonal uncertainties' and 'fertility of the soil' are factors that seem to have influenced such variations. 93 Where the crop was abundant, as in the deltaic area, a lower rate of vāram prevailed. A higher rate prevailed in upland taluks, where the crops were scarce. 94 The total number of Puṇa-kudis are shown in the Tables pertaining to the year A.D.1805. 95

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94. Ibid., pp.149-50

### TABLE - I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Villages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Number of Villages directly cultivated by Mirāśdars without the intervention of Puṟakudis</td>
<td>1,012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Number of Villages cultivated by Puṟakudis alone</td>
<td>1,898</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Number of Villages, partly cultivated by Puṟakudis and by Mirāśdars too</td>
<td>1,923</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>4,833</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE - 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Number of Puṟakudis engaged in the cultivation of lands belonging to brahmin Mirāśdars</td>
<td>28,823</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Number of Puṟakudis engaged in the cultivation of lands belonging to Sudra mirāśdars</td>
<td>18,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Number of Puṟakudis</strong></td>
<td><strong>47,822</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The TABLES prove that during British-rule, the number of non-cultivating mirasdars had swelled. They encouraged Puṟakudi cultivation. The encouragement given by brahmin land-owners had been considerable. This is because of the Śastraic injunction that brahmins should keep away from agricultural labour operations.
The British officials have estimated, that in terms of production, efficiency of vāramdārs was better than the serfs, who toiled under the direction of mirāśdars. The reason behind this was that the mirāśdars did not allow a proportionate share of the produce to the serfs, but only a daily allowance in money or kind. As the vāramdārs received a proportionate share, they naturally took more interest in the cultivation of the crop. The Wallace Report of 1805, says that the Puṇakudis had an active interest in cultivating the lands of the mirāśdars. The 'Vāram' allowed to the Puṇakudis was more or less fifty-percent of the produce in the 'Kudivāram' of the mirāśdars. This share-amount is more than what the vāramdārs received during Maratha rule. In the Company rule the 'Kudivāram' allowed to the mirāśdars was fifty-percent of the gross-produce which was ten-percent higher than in the Maratha-period. During this period, when the 'Kudivāram' ranged from fifty to sixty percent the Pycaries received twenty-three and twenty-six percent of the gross produce.

96. Mirāśi Papers - Letter of Harris to Board of Revenue May 1804, p.87.


Variations in rate from village to village are also noticed. Nowhere it is less than twenty-percent of the gross produce nor more than thirty-percent. 

Yet, the income of the Puṣkudis' was below sustenance level. There were many other restrictions that bound them with the Mirāsdar. They had to supply the agricultural stock necessary for cultivation throughout the year the seed, the grain, plough, and cattle. Should there be a shortage in supply "it would destroy the whole sustenance and chattel's of the Pycaries". Every accident and every misfortune would kill their industry. There were instances of Puṣkudis not providing agricultural stocks. Under such circumstances, advances were made to them in grain or cash by the Mirāsdars. Such advances were subsequently made good by the Vārdmārs at the time of harvest. The result was that they were always immersed in debts. Harris, the first collector of Tanjore, who drew attention to this fact said that "the Puṣkudis" and slaves fare alike and are considered to be coolies." 

99. Wallace Report (1.5.1805) op.cit., p.13

100. Mirāsi Papers "Extract from the Report of Mr.Harris..." op.cit., p.87.


This was the condition of the tenants even at the end of the eighteenth century in the district of Tanjore.

Agrestic servitude was common throughout India during British rule. In the northern part of the Presidency of Madras (popularly known as Telugu areas) there were agricultural labourers who were free. In other areas of the Presidency, they continued to live in a state of bondage. In Madras the Canar agricultural labourers were the personal properties of the land-lords. To own lands without them was inconceivable to the land-lords who welcomed uninterrupted continuation of the institution. In Tamil-speaking areas, where the land-lords dominated, this was hereditary and ever-present. As said before, the British were unable to usher in 'individual land-ownership' all on a sudden. Since "Communal ownership" lingered longer at Tanjore, the slaves here belonged to a community rather than to an individual. They could not be sold or mortgaged except along with the land to which they were attached. Sales had to be with the consent of the whole village.  

103. Ibid., "Memo of Col Blackeurne ......" op.cit.p.91.

A life led by the slave was miserable and relief was not provided either by the landlord or the Government. They were paid poorly and treated harshly. Buchanan in A.D.1800 reported "The common diet of a slave consists of boiled grain with a little salt and perhaps some pickles. He had little clothing and that little is extremely dirty." Even in A.D.1829, that is twenty-nine years after Buchanan's visit to the Tamil Country, there was no substantial improvement in the living condition of the serfs. In A.D.1822, Abbe J.A. Dubois said "Hardly anywhere are they (Pañayars) allowed to cultivate the soil for their own benefit but are obliged to hire themselves out to other castes who in return for a minimum wages exact the hardest task from them."  

A.D. Campbell, the collector of Tanjore (1833), reports that the slaves in Tanjore district were entitled to a certain portion of the harvest they cultivated and to prescribed fees in grain. "Besides food and clothing, the master defrays the expense of the marriage of his slaves and some small gifts on the birth of each child. As regards their wages in 1832, at Melattur of Tanjore district, daily


four small measures were paid to the field labourer. This was not sufficient for their sustenance." Slave women were employed by their masters to look after cattle, transplant "rice plants" and reaping corn. Their nature of work was continuous and laborious. They were exempted from work only on festival days. Even on such days, they were employed in erecting temporary rooms and pandals used by their masters. There were also occasions of collectors requesting the landowners to aid them in closing breaches in irrigation works. "On these occasions, the masters would involve the slaves in such works at Government expenses". Being a District of Temples", frequency of festivals was common. On such occasions, slaves were used for pulling the huge-sized cars of idols round the villages or temples.

Slaves could also be sold by their masters for arrears of revenue or any other reason. When the East-India Company took over the responsibility of governing Tanjore, "Slaves were attached to the soil" and the practice of selling them along with the land prevailed. But soon,


108. Ibid., p.575.

109. Ibid.,
slaves came to be sold or mortgaged either with land or separately. In A.D.1819, the Collector wrote "I do not find the system of slaves attached to the soil and transferable by purchase as an appendage to land obtains here." Pallans and Parayans slaved in return for maintenance throughout their lives. They could not be sold to distant parts of the country. In A.D.1838, a judge said that Pallans in the District had been sold both with and without land. Hepburn, the collector of Tanjore wrote "The slaves here are of two castes, the Pallar and Pariah". Religious taboos were there and did not entitle a member of these communities to land-ownership. The brahmans and higher-caste Hindus treated them as "Untouchables". Speaking of this, Hepburn observed "The Brahmans in consideration of their castes do not receive these bonds of slavery directly in their own name, but have them generally drawn out in that of the Sudra dependents."

110. Tanjore Records, 3284 Letter of J. Hepburn to Board of Revenue 30.6.1819, pp.73-75 (T.N.A.)

111. Ibid., pp.74-75.

112. Volume 3284 Op.cit Reply to Judge of Kumbakonam (23.1.1838) pp.73-6 (Mard. by D. Kumaran op.cit P.44)


114. Ibid., pp.73-74.
Within these two slave-castes the "Pallies" a Śūdra community who were not treated as 'untouchables' were included. They were generally attached to brahmin mirāṣdars, whereas Parayans and Pallans served the other caste land-owners. The status of 'Pallies' seems to have been better. In some places they have succeeded in usurping the rights of masters and had placed themselves in the possession of shares of Mirāṣ. Hence Ellis called these "Pallies" as the "Vassals of the Brahmins". The British felt that slavery was an integral part of the society and Indian agriculture would suffer much if agrarian servitudes were to be done away with. Local servitude received official blessings. It was a common feature for the collectors, in the early part of the Company's administration to help the land-owners in chasing the run-away slaves and restore them. Police were empowered to help the land-owners. Apart from the fear that they would lose revenue if the system is abolished, the government

118. Tanjore Records Vol.3254; Letter from Alex Grant, the collector regarding an advertisement for the return of absconding pallars and parayars dated 6.7.1800.(T.N.A.)
had to depend on their labour for maintenance of public works such as Canals, and tanks.\textsuperscript{119} Marking of boundaries, Measuring grain, Watching fields, burning the dead, were all attended to by them, and they were given rent-free lands too.\textsuperscript{120} The British seem to have been convinced that slavery in India was different from the types of slavery that they were conversant with, in Europe, and this was similar to those practised in West-Indies or Brazil.\textsuperscript{121} In India, the slave had certain rights and obligations.\textsuperscript{122}

England at this time witnessed anti-slavery agitations (Evangelists). Parliamentarians like Charles-grant and William Wilberforce, clamoured for its abolition. Such movements against slavery should have motivated the British in India to take some steps to abolish slavery. The Board of Revenue ordered for a review of the condition of agricultural labourers. The measures taken were half-hearted and the informations they received were incorrect and inadequate. Collectors did not collect proper

\textsuperscript{119} Mirāṣī Papers: p.336.

\textsuperscript{120} Mirāṣī Papers: p.337

\textsuperscript{121} Dharma Kumar: "Land and Caste" Op.Cit., p.34.

\textsuperscript{122} Mirāṣī Papers: p.336.
information by getting into touch with Pallars and Parayas. They entrusted the work with their Indian subordinates who never took it seriously. Some of them were slave-owners themselves and were not inclined to furnish correct information. The endeavour ended abortively.

The Collectors were misled and they informed the Head-quarters that the serfs were not cruelly treated. J.Hepburn, collector of Tanjore considered slavery as "a mild form of bondage which existed under voluntary agreements." The British officials never had the opportunity to gauge the intensity of the problem and the "social ill" was allowed to continue. Some of the officials understood the implications of the Social malady. The higher authorities had little faith in such official reports. The thorny problem remained unsolved even at the close of the Company rule. By A.D.1830, the 'Humanitarian Movement' in England had gained much support. The British-Government was forced to include a clause in the Charter Act of 1833, disfavouring slavery in British possessions. It was also envisaged that

slavery would be abolished in four years' time. The Court of Directors of the Company were alarmed. They worked against such humanitarian moves. A compromise was arrived at and it was agreed that slavery should be abolished as early as possible. Even this 'modified clause' was viewed with disfavour by the Company Directors. The question was shelved and the Indian serfs continued to suffer eagerly awaiting better climate for relief from bondage.

The British Economic and Revenue policy in the first half of the Nineteenth Century resulted in appropriation of the lands of the petty-owners by affluent landlords. The less fortunate were reduced in status and turned to be agricultural labourers or tenants. The misery of the agricultural serfs such as Pallâs and Parâyars remained untackled. The Company was keen on revenues and did not dare to displease the wealthy Land-lords. To safeguard Colonial interests, the Class character was preserved and passed on as a legacy.