CHAPTER-VII

CONCLUSION

The aforesaid study which is a panoramic attempt to examine the agrarian structure and the process of land control and social change in Mysore. The study invariably starts with the nature of the state formation in Mysore. With the fall of Tippu Sultan in 1799, Mysore lost its independent sovereign status by coming under the sovereignty of British. The subsidiary system was the basis of the company’s policy throughout the wars with Hyder and Tippu. Lord Wellesley with his determination to build a British Empire in India created a grandiose structure of what came to be known as Princely India, through display of arbitrariness in concluding treaties. Thus in Calicut, a 100 year old ruling family was turned into a mere land lord, while in Mysore 100 year old ruling family was reinstated only because Calicut was a rich pepper growing country while Mysore was a dry and non-prosperous land locked country. Thus, revenue value of the country annexed mattered most. The net result of instrument of transfer was the subordination of Maharaja’s authority to the interest of central government. State lost its internal autonomy. The transfer of state to Maharaja was a colonial necessity because it came at a time when there was a need for centralisation, uniformity of procedure and simplicity of administrative system to tap the economic resources in a more effective way. Mysore became a colonial prodigy by paying an annual subsidy which was unnecessary and superfluous strain on its resources. The freezing of the political status quo in Princely Mysore had far reaching effects on its economic development. It was harder for Mysore to borrow capital as it had to pay a higher rate of
interest in the form of subsidy as a price for its semi-autonomous existence. There was little or no income tax in the state, the chief sources of revenue being tax on land. Besides, the extravagant life style of the prince demanded lavish expenditure at the cost of economic development and this negated the values of enterprise, innovation, saving investment and improvement.

The introduction of revision settlements soon after rendition had a direct link with the imposition of a heavy feudal levy in the form of subsidy and hence it was a measure of colonial expediency. Being carved out as a landlocked country besides being deprived of the revenues from the civil and military station, Bangalore, princely Mysore, with its limited avenues for taxation, heavily depended on agriculture for sources. As and when subsidy amounts increased, land taxation pattern and its incidence changed. Besides the survey rates had no bearing on the output of land and its incidence had no uniformity. The rates on dry, wet and garden lands in Maidan and Malnad regions were conspicuously contradictory and uneven in their incidence. The revision surveys gave an upper hand to the survey officers. Peasantry was harassed in various ways. Remission rules also did not help the peasantry. The very process of demanding a remission involved delay and extortion. Besides, bad monsoons and floods, with multiplicity of other factors called for remitting land tax, but they went unnoticed by the government.

Government policy of zonal differentiation which was a greatest myth under ryotwari acted as a block in the uniform development of the region. Malnad received a preferential treatment, because its produce was exported and it was
profitable. The obnoxious impost of "halat" was abolished on many garden products to smoothen their exportation. In the name of Malnad improvement program, lakhs of rupees were spent to develop that region. As Malnad suffered from labour deficiency, government invited many foreign and indigenous settlers by offering them handsome facilities to settle in these areas. The Anglo-Indian settlement annually drained the government Rs 2.5 lakhs.

The railways, a private investment at public risk, represented the greatest injection of British capital into the state economy. Rail lines were laid down without consideration to economic development of the state and it did not coincide with national arteries of trade. The state suffered heavy losses due to great dislocation of transit as it had to abandon many transit duties. Mysore Durbar was compelled to provide land, timber etc free of cost. Besides, railways served as an important source of indirect taxation. Much of its profits was shipped away to London leaving Mysore in a state of economic drain.

Land market did not pose a good picture either. The fact that mortgages fetched more profits than sales showed that money lender had a strong grip over the debtor. His only realisable security was the debtor's crop and cattle and not his land, because the debtor did not own the piece of land in exclusive proprietorship. The sale price of the land exceeded greatly the total net annual income from agriculture which was a natural consequence of high land taxation and declining agricultural prospects. The net income from an acre of dry land in Maidan region was only Rs 79 while the same piece of land fetched Rs 312 when put up for sale. Thus, debtors increased and money lenders became numerous.
Money lending became an attractive profession for big land owners and inamdars. In due course of time preponderance of unprofessional money lenders over that of professional ones became striking. By 1940s, nearly 27% of the credit was provided by these people. The fact that they survived the introduction and popularisation of cooperative movement showed that they were indispensable to economy. Their very adoptability to the immediate needs of the borrowers revealed the failure of cooperative movement and land legislations. Hence, economic mobility of the people was curtailed and economic stagnation set in.

Inam holdings fell in the category of privileged land holdings. Half the area, nearly 45.9 percent of the total area was exempted from taxation in a proper sense, even in 1947. The inamdars were the privileged few of the state who enjoyed the land titles hereditarily with no periodical disturbance from the survey and revenue officials. Till the passing of the Inam Village Bill 1951, and Mysore Alienated Villages Act, giving protection to the tenants and miscellaneous cultivators of the inam lands, the condition of these class of tenants was conspicuously deplorable.

The British policy of continuing the former privileged classes in their dominant positions led to the dichotomy of Mysore into "ryotwari" area and an "inamdari" area simultaneously. The existence of rent-free inam lands proved a stumbling block in the establishment of a uniform revenue administration. This prevented the introduction and extension of a common body of rules and regulations covering land, labour etc, for the whole region. A considerable concentration of land in the hands of inamdars, wargadars and coffee planters revealed that ryotwari system had failed to
create a marginal peasant proprietorship. Though it did not create a structure of wealthy, prosperous landlords, politically dominating and strong at once, the ryotwari system was successful in subduing a greater number of peasants to a subordinate position. The continuance of hereditary lands and privileges social groups was thus a deliberate strategy to avoid any sweeping changes in social and political life. Besides, it served the purpose of quietening any agitative element raising its head in opposition to colonial policies. The creation of feudal nobility was essential for the economic and political support of imperialism. Hence, they could not be eliminated. Rather, their power and prestige were enhanced by legislative enactments.

The introduction of commercial agriculture into this static agrarian economy was a measure of political expediency to suit the colonial interests. The proprietary rights in land was deliberately established in order to woo the European capitalist to invest his capital on soil which never had produced cash crops purely for export. But, the introduction of a market-oriented cash economy into Mysore which was traditionally a subsistence economy induced a legislative action which called for permanent settlement of Europeans. Hence, an unique waste land tenure policy legalising the settlement of European investors was let loose in Mysore. This policy tempted the planters to grab more land than what was required and could be managed. To facilitate this land-grabbing, the system of 'fee simple' grants was introduced. The planters usurped the grazing fields and even encroached upon the pasturage and forest rights of the local cultivators. There were numerous cases where cultivators' lands not yet regularly settled were sold
as waste lands to European planters at throw away prices. Heavy acreage of lands, thus, passed into the hands of Europeans.

The introduction of plantation economy had far reaching consequences on the agrarian economy of Mysore. By withdrawing from the local population, the possibility of earning sufficient income in any way other than selling their labour power they created a modern labour force. The chief means employed to create this labour corps was the policy of transferring prime agricultural land from local to European ownership and by placing severe restrictions on local peasant cultivation. A new class of casual workers termed as annual farm servants was created in rural Mysore. The spread of production for exchange, instead of local consumption, introduced the element of private production, which resulted in the constitution of a class of planters of local, rural origin expropriating labour potential by engaging a corps of hired and paid labour. In course of time, intensification of these ties of capitalist exploitation led to the formation of a rural petty bourgeoisie which was characterised by possession of more than one estate, employing migrant, paid labour, engaging in other activities such as money lending, brokerage, trade, etc. They were petty bourgeoisie in the sense that although they were producing cash crops for the world market through the use of hired labour, they were not engaged in the creation of surplus value through the actual process of exploitation of labour power. By their multifarious links with bureaucracy, bankers and financial institutions, they gradually tightened their position in the social ladder.

The result of these changes was that the peasant sector remained weak and the plantation economy dominant. The
peasant economy remained an essentially subsistence economy concentrating on foodstuffs for domestic market surviving within the superstructure of plantation economy. The process of capitalist development contained within it seeds of under development which was directly attributable to the colonial factor and its mode of surplus extraction. This mode was based on exploitation of cheap labour and natural resources specifically to manage outside markets. This mercantile capital sponsored by the colonial agent acted as an 'active agent' in the process of surplus extraction initially, but its over-dependence on foreign markets did not allow local capital to flourish. Even in 1918, the membership of planters' association was purely European. Most of the companies registered outside had an upper hand in the share capital. Local capital, if any, found it difficult to compete as it did not have an easy access to trading companies which almost monopolised the circulating capital. This lack of adequate working capital reduced the ability of local planters to purchase materials and to execute export orders. This severely restricted the possibility of reinvestment of surplus capital. Most of the companies worked from Madras with headquarters in London. It was only after 1918 that small local trading firms took root. But their weakness was conspicuous by their inability to obtain better prices for the goods produced. At the beginning of Second World War, British owned or controlled 82% of the total area under tea, 70% under coffee and rubber, involving a capital outlay of Rs 15.65 crores. These European settlers as a class resembled more an aristocratic than a capitalist entrepreneur group. The introduction of commercial agriculture hence reinforced absentee landlordism.

But, the way towards development of capitalism was not easy for the colonialists. They had to make arrangements
with the existing local semi-feudal lords, like the inamdars, shraya holders etc. Though British capitalists tried to create a modern private landed property, they had to compromise with the previous land rent collectors and a large mass of starving peasantry. So, what the British industrial capital could do, was just to recreate a number of modern elite out of this, and made them subordinate to British capital.

The ryotwari system ensured the government a substantial portion of total gross rent of the country. They very well knew that these rents were bound to rise with every extension of cultivation to inferior soils because the marginal output from the marginal land was bound to fall in course of time. This necessity to extend cultivation arising out of pressure on land, gave way to merchants, and money lenders, etc who had liquid money capital. The rural money lender dominated the rural scene with his usury capital. About 80 percent of the peasants were in debt to money lenders.

Debt percentage was comparatively higher than other provinces. An enquiry conducted in the Mysore villages showed that out of 128 villages surveyed, 73% of the total area cultivated was mortgaged. Average debt per village stood at Rs 731/-. Considering that average cultivated area was only 2.7 acres and that the predominant form of cultivation was dry land, this amount of Rs 731/- was very high. In these villages, it was also discovered that agriculturists had mortgaged 5,269 acres to non-agriculturists as compared to only 340 acres being mortgaged by the latter to the former which showed that in the Mysore villages the non-agriculturist money lender was predominant.
Besides, the rate of interest charged was also high and it was nearly 12%, while it was only 9% in Punjab. In a number of cases, interest was taken in kind in advance. In a few cases, instead of the interest being paid in money or in kind, there was the system of 'jeeta' by which the mortgager himself or his family undertook to serve the mortgagee on the land for a stipulated period and such a system later on became indistinguishable from serfdom. Besides, behind the loan transactions, there were several invisible factors which considerably added to the burden of the interest charges. A commission was frequently deducted from the capital and the interest amount was deducted in advance, to the advantage of the money lender. Sometimes the amount was overstated in the accounts and numerous dues and services were exacted. Quite often, the account was not at all maintained. Most potent cause for mortgage of land was settlement of prior debts. The marriage and other social functions also necessitated mortgaging.

Another issue closely connected with this was the execution of a penal clause in case of default. This consideration obtains an added weight from the fact that the mortgages generally represented not a single transaction between the lender and the borrower, but was the culmination of a series of transactions with piling up interest rates. Besides in majority of cases, period was not specified. As a general rule, the usurious mortgages ran for a longer period than simple mortgages and mortgages in Malnad were of greater duration than those of maidan districts. In several of the cases, there was no definite arrangement for redumption. Redumption through savings represented not even one-fourth of transactions and the mortgager followed his own methods of recovery of advances.
Sowcars in maidan region and "suttigedars" in Malnad region played an important role in financing trade and agriculture. The Loan Act of 1923, which was amended in 1939 had little relief to offer to peasants. Every loan on land was accompanied by a security of land assets of the peasants. Though Mysore was well linked with banking institutions, the agricultural finance was still at par. On a very small scale the cooperative organisation within the state attempted to meet the financial and banking needs of the state. The agricultural cooperative credit did not touch even the fringe of the problem. Its development was closely linked with the problem of efficiently marshalling the state resources for the economic betterment of the peasantry and in Mysore this was nothing but impossible. With Government controlling the finance allocation of these institutions, one could hardly expect capital accumulation. Such a conservative policy naturally limited the expansion of agricultural finance and as a direct consequence, peasant was drawn towards local money lender.

Though many criticisms were raised against the working of the rural money lender in Juxtaposition to British capital, government did not frame any strict laws to curb his influence in rural side. Though Banking Enquiry Committee Reports recommended the setting up of rural cooperative societies, the government stalled the establishment of such an institution only because money lender was the sole representative of the British capital, money lender, though an 'evil', was a 'necessary evil'.

British colonisers often used methods of extra economic coercion to bind the agricultural labourers. This played a tremendously important role in the emergence of a wage force
in Mysore which did not accompany any commodity production. When settlement of Europeans was made legal many parts of good land was immediately occupied by these settlers. Nearly three-fourth of Malnad was owned by Europeans in 1881 and some favoured settlers procured land even upto 10,000 acres. This heavy appropriation of land prevented the local people from acquiring lands. This created an artificial scarcity of land for local people who were made to seek for jobs in the European plantations for their subsistence. Sometimes, forcible alienation of huge tracts of land in favour of Europeans also accelerated the process of dispossession of local people from their lands.

Besides, the introduction of the monetary taxes such as shop tax, "mohatarfa", house tax, loan tax, graze tax, etc, which were replacing the taxes in kind, destroyed peasants' subsistence economy. This also forced them to enter into commodity and money relationships imposed by the colonial government. This was a chief force of indirect, extra economic governmental coercion, which gradually dispossessed the local people from their lands. The very issue of collecting taxes in money was exacting, because in a traditional subsistence oriented economy like that of Mysore, where agriculture was the main stay of the people, where agriculture was not a profitable avocation and where non-agricultural occupations were anything but absent, the money taxation was oppressive. In course of time, exaction of the money in the name of taxation increased and peasants became increasingly indebted. In majority of cases, his lender was a wealthy landlord and peasant was indirectly coerced under him to work for wages to pay off his debts.
The labour intensive coffee plantations always depended on labour importation from Madras Presidency and Canara. Sometimes, they recruited the labour force through agents popularly called 'maistrees'. A "maistree" soon became inevitable to planters. The most striking disadvantage of this system was the system of paying commissions. This commission was an unearned income and was not only obnoxious on economic and moral principles but amounted to the cheating of labourer out of his legitimate dues. Only in 1929, the system was called off. As an effect of pre-employment advances, labourer's wages in plantations never fetched him a comfortable living and he soon became indebted to his immediate banker - the maistree.

Compared with the general labour, contract labour worked for longer hours, while the general labour was paid directly by the employer. Contract labour was paid through recruiting agents. The organisation of contract labour itself was on the ability and facility of the maistrees to squeeze maximum income out of the wages of the workers. Contract system of labour recruitment gave rise to unnecessary competition among agents, and it restricted the mobility among the coolies. As all coolies were released from contract after 11 months, he could not claim a share in the prospective profit of the industry. No labour welfare measures could be introduced and this explains the absence of any labour organisation among coffee coolies.

Like slavery, this system was a legally controlled system of surplus exaction and it aimed at limiting the development of a labour market. But unlike slavery, it coexisted with a class casual labour force.
The conditions of agricultural labour was no better. Their problems were more varied and complex. Though overwhelming in numbers, this sector was non-organised. Various factors augmented their impoverishment, chief of which were the transfer of agricultural land to mortgagers and substitution of a subsistence economy by cash nexus economy. Agrestic servitude and debt bondage were inevitable under such conditions. Servitude drove them for destitution and thraldom. There was no regulation regarding the hours of work, holidays, mid-day rest, housing, etc. Wages were often paid in kind, migration was also a restricted and limited undertaking and was never thought of, as a remedy for idleness and low income. The problem of agricultural labour became further complex when landlord began to demand for applying the Breach of Contract Act to agricultural labourers also. Labourers had no organisational support. The absence of one single dominant caste was in a sense responsible for the absence of caste-based resistance to organisation of the rural labourers.

The data concerning economic inequality that were visible in Mysore indicated that a continuous process of differentiation was under way among the peasantry. This process was a direct consequence of exploitation of the working classes in the countryside. Deep differences in the ownership pattern proved this fact. But, this indicated only a limited process of social differentiation or class stratification because the number of capitalist farmers was very limited. Even though there was increase in the number of non-peasant owners of small estates, dynamic small-scale capitalist farmer could note emerge because the plantation system in Mysore did not permit the evolution of such a class from the ranks of average peasantry.
This difference in the economic strata led to a consciousness among the middle and lower level of people and as a result many major communities of Mysore were soon found fighting amongst themselves for a berth in the politico-economic ladder. The caste associations were started with the purpose of alleviation of one's caste in the social hierarchy with a demand for access to higher education and this was a turning point in the history of Mysore, because they had discovered that cultural exclusion curtailed their economic advancement.

A study in elite leadership revealed many dimensions of the process of social changes in a traditional society like Mysore. The political system at different levels right from the grassroot level, was under the control of leadership which came from high caste families having tradition, status, wealth and other attributes. But, the traditional leadership waned under the impact of urbanisation, literacy, communication, industrialisation and this caused social mobility. Mobility led to mobilisation through associations, which became a platform for redressing grievances. Under the impact of occupational secularisation, associations came in contact with political aspects of economic policy making. This led to widespread discontentment and economic unrest. Many protest and agitations became a natural corollary to this. The fight for justice was initially done through caste associations and only later through the political parties. The merger of these two associational network was hampered because the fight was always viewed as a brahmin and non-brahmin affair. The process of widening the geographic limits of a power structure led to involvement of wider networks of local associations and institutions. The net result of such expansion was the involvement of caste in
politics. The exclusion of princely India from national mainstream politics, figured high in the political discussions of 1930s.

The national movement gained momentum after the First World War and when depression set in, the movement had deep-rooted in itself. Depression was felt by all sectors of economy in the form of declining prices, low income, low productivity, unemployment, etc. It was during this period that civil disobedience movement was launched by Gandhi and in all major cities there were strikes, hartals, etc. Gandhi's new technique of non-payment of taxes as a method of fighting government brought an awakening among peasant classes. But, when the movement was at its height, Gandhi withdrew it and it created a lot of dissatisfaction and discontentment. This discontentment fanned the desires of the local elite groups and socialists and nationalist leaders to think of a local party within the framework of Congress Central party Mysore Praja Paksha, Praja Mitra Mandali, etc were the natural outcome of such a new trend. This was welcomed by leaders of Mysore as most of them had volunteered themselves in the Gandhi sponsored national struggles earlier and were well versed with the modus operandi of a Satyagraha. Jawaharlal Nehru, the most prominent socialist to emerge in mid 30s was the propogator of the prevalent thought and sponsored it through his articles in which he argued that only a socialist ideology and programme could emancipate peasants from foreign yoke. The masses of Mysore were not late to come under its spell. Mass awakener's union came up with the sole motto of spreading socialist ideologies. Nehru was instrumental in involving the peasantry in the mainstream struggle, though Gandhi was against it.
The Irwin Canal agitation of 1932, the no-rent campaign of Shikaripur taluk peasantry of 1930, Kolar ryots agitation of 1929, etc grew out of a consciousness among the peasantry of the fact that colonial exploitation is the main factor of their chronic poverty and economic disparity. The work of caste associations in mobilising people to demand higher political concessions was also coincidental. By the time the movement for national liberation had gained momentum, the involvement of peasantry into this mainstream was anything but inevitable. The Mysore government left no stone unturned in suppressing the tide of nationalism. Despite repressive measures, the movement spread and government had at last to accede to popular demand. These agitations were instrumental in making the Government pass some legislations regarding debt reconciliation, contract labour, usurious loans, etc. These very legislations went so far in employing the pressure from working class to the government to reassess their approach towards such a vast mass of toiling people and to reconsider some old and conservative laws which were modelled on either Bombay or Madras systems. The freedom movement gained momentum in Mysore amidst suppression. But by championing the cause of peasantry, the local and the national Congress leaders were able to lean for support on peasantry to fight colonial dominance. This culminated in the achievement of freedom from colonial yoke in 1947.