CHAPTER - 6

CONCLUSION

The peasantry and the people of Telangana had been struggling against the forced labour, illegal exactions, evictions by the feudal lords, deshmukhs and jagirdars. The agrarian social structure is closely corresponded to the structure of landownership, power and authority. Agriculture was and is, considered to be the main source of livelihood to the bulk of the population. But the agricultural methods were primitive and imperfect. The better soils are cropped regularly; the inferior soils are discarded. Agricultural production is very much determined by the factors like the size of landholdings and pattern of land distribution, irrigation facilities, type of cultivation and methods employed etc.

On account of the increase in the value of land and also the lack of suitable and remunerative subsidiary occupation, more and more number of people began to depend on land for their living. Big landlords deshmukhs who owned entire villages found it profitable to let their vast lands on lease and themselves take up non-cultivating occupations like excise contracts, money-lending, grain-lending and running of mills etc. The region being primarily agricultural the economic relation is occupied by its land system.
The patels and patwaris due to their landed property and local background commanded, considerable influence in rural administration. Besides these officials, there were Deshmukhs, Deshpandes, Sardeshmukhs and Sardeshpandes, all hereditary landlords. They were allowed to retain their huge landed estates. They had the opportunity of seizing the lands by way of compensation for being deprived of their right of tax collection. They indulged in the most lucrative trades of money-lending and grain-lending, toddy contract, which not only made them exceedingly rich but more important than that, completely kept the different sections of rural population under their strong and unrelenting thumb. Watan rights of several villages were confined to the members of a single family.

These factors naturally encouraged them to perpetrate different types of excesses indulging vetti and all punishments inflicted on them by the suba authorities were not only rare but seldom effective. Asaldars appointed Gumastas on their behalf to discharge their duties in different villages this made no difference to the enjoyment and exercise of vast and varied powers and authority by these big watandars.

In the state of Hyderabad under the rule of Nizam administration was carried out initially by means of contract system through Mustajars, who were also known as Tahuddars. In Hyderabad state and Telangana area where paddy was a common crop, water was an essential input. Diwani lands were held under various types of tenures, the most popular being the ryotwari system / tenure. The other types of tenures such as the Pan Makta, Tahud / Sarbasta and Ijara were only exceptions to the main
ryotwari holding. The holders of land under this category possessed the land not by way of any grant by the government. Several reasons attributed to the existence of a large number of absentee landlordism. Pan-Makta land tenure was in existence until the reforms were introduced by Salar Jung-I. It was a contractual kowl. These lands were given either in perpetuity or for one life or a number of lives. Most of the pan-Maktadars were rich and influential people and senior officers of the Government.

The Peshkush type of Diwani tenure involved the former zamindars who held the land under a system of permanent settlement. Ijara came into existence as a result of the Salar Jung-I reforms. Due to maladministration and exploitation of the cultivators by the guttidars and other local landlords the cultivators deserted the fields and migrated to the neighbouring provinces. This happened particularly in Telangana region where the poor peasants could not withstand the pressures which resulted in whole villages being deserted.

The complex nature of feudal society and domination was exercised by the landlords over the peasantry at the grass root level. The villages of Telangana were dominated by particular type of landlords called Deshmukhs. Having been made a presence of the dominant position in the rural economy, they absolutely strengthened themselves during the succeeding years. The jagirdars were so powerful that they grabbed the land fraudulently. In which he reduced the actual cultivator to the status of a tenant-at-will or landless labour. The jagirdars, zamindars and Deshmukhs exploited their tenants and labourers through pernicious practices like vetti and
(forced labour) Begar or Bhagela. The feudal domination in Telangana was predominantly and prominently expressed by force (physical) and coercion. The accounts of political instances of Telangana armed struggle are full of feudal landlord repression and brutalities.

The category of caste and class were to a large extent interlinked. The fusion and convergence of caste and class contributed to the emergence of two distinct groups of people, namely landlords and peasants/tenants. The first group (landlords), consisted of the minority section of the society though owned and controlled land and other resources but did not participate in the process of production. The second group, though heterogeneous in terms of caste was the majority section comprising mainly of the tillers of the land. The cultivators who tilled the land and harvested its yield had no rights in the land. The jagirdars were basically the parasitic rent-receiving landholders who exercised ownership right in land and other resources without undertaking supervision and cultivation of land. The Reddys and Kammans mainly consisted the landlord category. Generally speaking, landlordism was closely associated with the permanent settlement. The jagirdars owned vast landed properties. The village officers’ families held considerable acres of land and controlled other economic resources in the country side. Their wealth and richness enabled them to exercise power and domination over the dependent peasantry. Since they occupied village offices (patel and patwari) and positions it was possible for them to command respect and authority. Below the landlords was found a large peasant community comprising owner-cultivators, occupancy tenants and under
tenants, the artisan castes like Sale, Goundla, Chakali and Mangali etc, did own some land but it was too meagre to depend upon for livelihood. Since many of these castes witnessed the destruction of their traditional occupations, they swelled the ranks of the rural poor. The artisan castes gradually lost their landed property in favour of other dominant people, mainly jagirdars, deshmukhs, deshpandes and thus became landless.

The evolution of the land tenure system strengthened the position of the jagirdars as well as big zamindars in terms of their control over the land. For years, the jagirdars had been able to command and exercise immense power and authority in the country side mainly because of their grip over land. The jagirdari agrarian structure enabled the landlord class as a whole to appropriate a larger share of agrarian surplus by means of extraction of exorbitant rents. The landlords’ authority was in fact, maintained on the basis of rack-renting. The jagirdar power was further reinforced since they acquired enormous wealth and affluence based on rack-renting and illegal cesses. Acquisition of wealth and control over resources enabled the landlords to maintain their higher status. It also sustained their hold and hegemony over rural society, economy and polity. It can be said that besides controlling vast areas, the jagirdars also possessed private (serī) lands running into thousands of acres. The private lands were enlarged by illegal occupation and encroachments. The jagirdars, deshmukhs and deshpandes employed farm-servants and wage labourers to cultivate their lands. The possession of vast estates and private lands helped the landlords exercise control over their tenants. Most of the big landlords were also
money-lenders. By leasing out lands and advancing money they were able to tighten their grip over the dependent tenantry. As creditors, the landlords always commanded authority over debtors. By virtue of ‘proprietorship’ over land, the jagirdars leased – out lands to whomsoever they wanted and displace the tenants-at-will at their will and pleasure. The threat of eviction coerced the tenantry into submission. The lower castes such as Chakali, Mangali and Kummari etc used to lease in lands from landlords. They were the exploited lot as they were subjected to frequent rack-renting and illegal exactions. Control over land and acquisition of wealth and affluence helped the landlords to exercise power and authority. Being powerful men in the country side they did command their creditors and debtors. The landlords exercised both economic and social domination over the peasants. Although the landlords exercised authority over the village community for a long time, it did not remain unchallenged.

The peasantry and the people of Telangana had been struggling against the forced labour, illegal exactions, evictions by the feudal landlords, deshmukhs and jagirdars. The struggle was directed against the autocratic regime of the Nizam Nawab of Hyderabad against the oppression of his bureaucratic officials such as the village patels, patwaris etc. The basic feature that dominated the socio-economic life of the people of Hyderabad state, especially in Telangana, was the unbridled feudal exploitation that persisted well-nigh till the beginning of the Telangana peasant struggle. The paigas were estates granted to Muslim feudals. The jagirs and samsthanams were those given to reward officers. Maktas, Banjars, Agraharam and
Inams were given for various services, and these owners were entitled to fleece the peasantry and take as much as they could extract.

The feudal landlords had acquired the lands by foul means from the ordinary people. The major portion of the lands cultivated by the peasants came to be occupied by the landlords during the first survey settlement. These people who had power in their hands got lands registered in their names without the knowledge of the peasants who were cultivating them and when the peasants came to know of it, it was too late to do anything. Thus, the feudal lords got possession of unlimited vast lands and made them their legal possession. Even lands which were left in possession of the peasants in the survey settlement were occupied by the landlords in the years of the economic crisis of 1920-22 and 1930-33, when the peasants either due to bad harvests or unfair prices for the crops were unable to pay the taxes, these feudal landlords tortured the peasants who were unable to pay the taxes and got hold of their lands. Many a time this acquisition took place even without the knowledge of the peasants.

The landlords lend agricultural produces like grain, chillies etc, to the peasants at exorbitant usurious rates and later under the pretext of non-repayment of loans, confiscated the lands. This system was prevalent at the time of Telangana struggle. Vetti system had made the life of the Telangana people one of the utter degradation and of object serfdom. It had ruined human self-respect completely. The movement for its abolition became widespread.
The Heroic struggle of poor Muslim peasant Bandagi against Visunuri Deshmukh during the twenties whose martyrdom immortalized in the popular drama, *Ma Bhoomi* (My land) during the early days of Telangana armed struggle in 1945-46. It was on this issue that the peasantry came into head-on confrontation with the feudal lords against whom bitter battles were fought. Visunur *Deshmukh* of Janagaon taluq, Suryapet *Deshmukh*, Babasahebpet *Deshmukh* (Miryalguda taluq), Kalluru *Deshmukh* (Madhira taluq) and Jannareddy Pratap Reddy of Suryapeta taluq.

In 1928, Andhra Maha Sabha was formed in Hyderabad state under the leadership of Sri Madapati Hanumanth Rao and others. In the Telangana region, the Andhra Maha Sabha became their forum, and they tried to develop it as a broad political organisation. During the period of 1940-44, the communist party and the left cadre of the Andhra Maha Sabha carried on agitation that favoured the peasants and the people and were put into practice. They conducted many struggles and agitations against zamindars and deshmukhs, against the practices of vetti, illegal exactions and evictions.

The struggle of Telangana people assumed radical and militant character. The peasant struggle in Telangana steadily acquired the character of an agrarian revolt; finally raised the slogans for the abolition of landlordism for the overthrow of Nizam’s autocratic rule. The Telangana peasant struggle initially began as self-defence with lathis and slings against the goonda attacks of the deshmukhs and
Razakars and the atrocities of the police forces of the Nizam had culminated in an armed liberation struggle against the princely state of Hyderabad.

The communists began a three-pronged attack on the enemies of the peasant First, to put an end to vetti. Secondly, condemned large scale eviction of tenants and demanded both abolition of landlordism and a moratorium on all debts. Thirdly they adopted a dual policy on the question of the ‘procurement of grain through compulsory levy’.

As the insurrection enveloped into a mass struggle, the poor peasants particularly tenants, and share-croppers, and the landless began to seize lands from the landlords and deshmukhs which they later distributed among themselves. The principal participants in the revolts were thus unquestionably the poor peasants and landless labourers. Most of the recruits to the dalams came from the untouchable and backward castes. The poor peasants and the landless were the backbone of the struggle from the beginning till the end.

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