

Economic Trends in Kanyakumari District

^[1] Dr.N.Mary Usha, ^[2] Mrs.J.Chysolite Bessie
^[1] Assistant Professor of History, ^[2] Ph.D Research Scholar
^{[1][2]} Scott Christian College(Autonomous), Nagercoil.

Abstract:-- The economy of every country is based on land and its people. The distribution of land as it exists in Kanyakumari District is chiefly the result of social customs, the laws of inheritance and the legislative enactments that were made from time to time. It was the feudal based economy that severely affected the economy of the common people. Kanyakumari District was preeminently an agricultural area. 47.2% of the population depending for their means of livelihood almost exclusively upon land, a feature peculiar to the west coast of Travancore. The district, once called as “the Granary of Travancore” and its fertile area with hundreds of water bodies and a canal irrigation system commanded a predominant status. However all avenues of activity had been pursued by people to derive their income.

Keyword:-- Kanyakumari District, Economic Trends, agricultural.

The economy of every country is based on land and its people. The distribution of land as it exists in Kanyakumari District is chiefly the result of social customs, the laws of inheritance and the legislative enactments that were made from time to time. It was the feudal based economy that severely affected the economy of the common people. Kanyakumari District was preeminently an agricultural area. 47.2% of the population depending for their means of livelihood almost exclusively upon land, a feature peculiar to the west coast of Travancore. The district, once called as “the Granary of Travancore” and its fertile area with hundreds of water bodies and a canal irrigation system commanded a predominant status. However all avenues of activity had been pursued by people to derive their income.

They earned their living by engaging themselves in cottage industries such as weaving, mat weaving, mulch animals rearing, coir making etc. They reared poultry, maintained beehives, worked as casual labourers or artisans. They also engaged themselves in works such as collections of monazite from the beaches of Kanyakumari District followed by refining of the mineral contents of the sands. It led to the establishment of the Indian Rare Earths Limited at Manavalakurichy of Kalkulam Taluk under the control of the Atomic Power Board of the Government of India. The mineral plant had been a source of employment for the youth of this area. Further it was a source of income for the Manavalakurichy village panchayat as the company regularly paid royalty to the latter.

As in other parts of Travancore, private ownership of land existed in Kanyakumari District long before the Sangam age. In course of time, powerful chieftains took control of the lands and came to be called as Naduvazhis and Desavazhis. Following the arrival of Aryans during the 7th and 8th centuries temples became the centres of learning and cultural

activities. Since large tracts of land were required for the maintenance of the temples, the erstwhile sons of the soil donated their lands voluntarily. As Brahmins were considered to be superior to others, the kings entrusted the entire administration of lands with them. Thus temples along with its lands came under the control of Brahmins.

During the Chola-Chera War, as the Chera kings imposed land tax on non-temple lands, the sons of the soil, in order to get tax exemptions handed over their lands to temples for a nominal price and continued their cultivation. In course of time, Brahmins reduced the legal ownership to the position of Kudiyan or tenants. Thus a substantial portion of land came into the hands of the Devaswoms. By the 12th century, the Nambudiri Jenmis had become powerful and the temple lands were gradually converted into Brahmin lands. The Jenmi landlords means Brahmins being owners of land, never cultivated their lands. They used their tenants to do the job. Due to several disputes and litigations between the landlord and the tenant, the relationship between them strained. Consequently the government interfered and set things on equitable basis.

During that time Kanyakumari District possessed jenmivaka lands and pandaravaka lands. The cultivators of pandaravaka held the lands on pattom and had no right to sell them. The government had the right to evict them at any time. To avoid this eviction, the then Travancore king Ayilliam Tirunal issued a proclamation known as Pandarapattom Proclamation on 2nd June 1855. By that all Sircar Pattom lands became private property of the holders. Two years later another proclamation was issued which gave security of tenure to the ryots and encouraged improvement of the land.

In jenmivaka lands, as the jenmis evicted the tenants or Kudiyan without sufficient compensation, the then Maharaja issued the Jenmi Kudiyan proclamation of on 1867 for

sufficient compensation. As per the Proclamation, the Kudiyans could inherit the land, improve it or even sell it as if he had perfect ownership.

As Jenmis and Kudiyans faced various difficulties they made repeated representations to the King. Hence a Commission was appointed during 1884 A.D. 1885 A.D to improve the Jenmi – Kudiyian relationship. The outcome of the Commission was the passing of Jenmi-Kudiyian Regulation of on 1896 A.D. As per the Regulation, Kudiyans were conferred the fixity of tenure, his right was made heritable and transferable. However eviction of the tenants was allowed in case of non- payment of rent for twelve years. In 1915, a committee was again appointed and on its recommendations Bill was published in 1924. Due to the opposition of the landlords the recommendations were modified.

As in Travancore the chief categories of tenure in Kanyakumari District were broadly classified into jenmom land tenure and tenure and Sircar or Pandaravaka or Government land tenure the chief systems of tenancy were verumpattom or venpattom, kanam or kuzhikana, otti, etc., In the verumpattom tenure the tenant took possession of the property and paid an annual rent to the landlord as agreed upon. He was bound to quit the land at the expiry of his term. From 1892 A.D. onwards the pattom on paddy land and garden lands were fixed as $\frac{1}{4}$ of the gross produce. However, if no trees were found on the assessed lands pattom had been assessed and it was equivalent to the payattupattom tenure. The pattom on buildings were fixed as one half of the rental value.

The kuzhikanam tenure also existed in Kanyakumari District and the period was fixed as twelve years. Otti, another transaction tenure also existed in Kanyakumari District by which the Jenmi borrowed a stipulated amount against the security of his land. The land was left with the Kudiyian for enjoyment of its produce as interest for the amount.

The notable tenures practiced at Kanyakumari District for the Sircar government lands were Pandarapattom, Inam, Viruthi and Thiruppuvanam. Pandarapattom was the tenure defined as a lease without any proprietary or transferable rights. But later the tenants became owners of their land if they had paid tax to the government.

Inams were the grants of lands made by ruling princes, chieftains or great Jenmis for the service rendered to the state or sovereign. Inams were classified into service inams and personal inams. During the year 1912 a royal proclamation was made and it paved the way for mortgage, to sell or transfer the personal inams.

Another land tenure existed in Kanyakumari District was viruthi or the service grants, by which the viruthi holders enjoyed certain lands on assessment for rendering certain services. Such services were supply of vegetables and other articles to Sircar, Uttupuras, Sircar temples on ceremonial occasions in the palace during erection of sheds, providing supplies during royal tours etc. The system was found to be good at the time of its inception. But later it became a burden on holders and ultimately this system was abolished in 1909 A.D.

Thiruppuvanam, another land tenure which existed in Kanyakumari District dealt with the assignment of revenue or rent to any religious, educational or charitable institution or individual. The tax due to the government was being collected by the government from the thiruppu holder. Thiruppu holder, in turn, collected the rent from the thiruppu land holder. In Kanyakumari District such thiruppu lands had existed in many of the villages.

The kandukrishi land was another system of Sircar tenure found in Kanyakumari District and was defined as the home farm of the sovereign. The ryot who tilled the home farm land paid his rent in kind. However the Maharani of Travancore abolished the system of paying rent in kind and revoked the payment in cash during 1102 M.E.

Sreepadam lands belonged to the female members of the royal family of Travancore. These lands were not assessable under the tax proclamation of 1946. These lands were found in the villages of Manavalakurichy, Eraniel, Kadiapattanam, Thalakulam, Aloor, Colachel, Kalkulam, Ponmanai, Attoor, Kothanallur and Kappiyara of Kanyakumari District.

After 1956 the Tamilnadu Government ordered a survey of the whole of Kanyakumari District and as the former survey was done some sixty years ago, a new survey officer was appointed. Hence the entire area of Kanyakumari District was resurveyed and records had been maintained. The Tamilnadu Land Reforms Fixation of Ceiling of Land Act was passed in 1961. As per the Act ceiling area for a family of five members was fixed at 30 standard acres. This Act also permitted an allowance of five standard acres for each additional member in the family. But the overall ceiling of a family was sixty standard acres.

Agriculture was the main occupation of the people. Agricultural situation of Kanyakumari District has remained almost static in its basic aspects. Due to the peculiar system of inheritance agricultural holdings have been subjected to extreme fragmentation. The average size of an agricultural holding was half an acre to three-fourth of an acre. People

cultivated various crops like banana, betel-vine, vegetables, coconut, tapioca, rubber etc.,

Paddy crop received top most priority and 11012.1 acres of land in Kanyakumari District came under paddy cultivation. Coconut crop stood foremost in the garden cultivation of Kanyakumari District. It occupied an extensive area in the coastal belt. The area under the cultivation of coconut in Kanyakumari District was 19.1 square miles. Every house garden possessed at least a few plantains.

Rubber, one of the principal crops in Kanyakumari District, occupied an area of 820 acres even in 1930 A.D. Due to the cultivation of rubber, Kalkulam became the highest earning taluk of Kanyakumari District. It produced a superior quality of rubber and got premium price in international markets. Rubber cultivation provided employment opportunities for the youth of Kanyakumari District. Rubber planters contributed to the economic prosperity of the region. To get a large income the farmers as well as the estate owners switched over to rubber planting in all kinds of lands. Hence rubber crop had effectively occupied the area earlier covered by tapioca, fruit trees, palmyra, coconut etc.,

Along with coconut, banana, tapioca and rubber, coffee and tea were the important crops in this taluk. During the year 1942 A.D. tea occupied an area of 705 acres and coffee 41 acres. Eucalyptus, Alloizzia and Cloves were cultivated in the taluk, off-season bearing horticulture crops like tamarind and pepper were cultivated. Inter – cropping of areca nut, banana, pine apple were in vogue in Kanyakumari District. The farmers of Kanyakumari District also had grown various crops like betel and vegetables. They also cultivated kantha and mutti, a highly aromatic and tasty banana, on the hill slopes.

Due to the availability of a variety of agricultural products in Kanyakumari District many trade centres had been established throughout the Kanyakumari District and they have been still functioning successfully. Trade centres were located at Monday Market, Kulasekaram, Eraniel, Colachel, Thiruvattar, Meakmandapam, Manavalakurichy, Friday Market, Thuckalay and Thikkanamcode. The only important seaport in the Kanyakumari District was at Colachel and shipping was being carried on from here. Many important articles were exported from Colachel to Bombay and Tuticorin. The coffee produced in Kanyakumari District was also exported from Colachel port. The other chief items of export included palmyra, aloe plants, mineral sands, fish and salt. The coir yarn was one of the major items exported from Colachel port.

In order to improve the economy of the agriculturists, the irrigation system was properly organized. It added further to the economy of the people of Kanyakumari District. In ancient days the wet lands of Kanyakumari District were chiefly depended on rain-fed tanks. Kanyakumari District consisted of 464 rain-fed tanks. They were used for irrigation, bathing and washing purposes. Though the tanks were numerous, in most cases they were urns containing water just enough for cultivating a few acres of land.

REFERENCES

- [1] V. Nagam Aiya op.cit., Vol. III, Madras, 1989
- [2] N. Parameswaran Pillai, A Concise History of Travancore, Trivandrum 1943
- [3] The Regulations and Proclamations of Travancore, Vol.VIII, Trivandrum, 1937
- [4] Administrative Report of the Land Revenue Department 1117 M.E.(1942), Trivandrum, 1943
- [5] Ulloor S. Parameswara Aiyer, Progressive Travancore under Sri Moolam Tirunal, Kochi, 1998
- [6] R. Krishna Rao, A Revenue Hand Book of Travancore, Trivandrum, 1889