

The Land Revenue Policy and Land Tenure System of Shivappa Nayaka and Tipu Sultan: A Progressive Approach

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Abstract- Agriculture is always the main occupation of the common man and the main source of revenue for the state. The 17th and 18th centuries AD are known for the progressive developments in science, technology, and political philosophy in Europe. In addition to this, in south India, the names of Keladi Nayaka and Mysore state are most important in the annals of this area. As per the records, under the rule of Shivappa Nayak and Tipu Sultan of Mysore State, a systematic revenue policy was framed, which later scholars graded as the most standard one. The Keladi king, Shivappa Nayaka, devised the ideal revenue and land tenure system called Sistu, in which revenue should be collected based on the survey, gradation of land, and quality of cultivation. In the same way, Tipu Sultan also devised a systematic land revenue system and a tenure system based on a survey, gradation of land, and quality of cultivation. In revenue policy, we can see three things: one is a state, the second is tenants, and the third is land. In this policy, the state gives the farmers ownership of the cultivation of land; for this, the farmer needs to share some part of his cultivation with the state in the form of land revenue. In devising this policy, both Shivappa Nayaka and Tipu Sultan adopted a responsive and people-friendly revenue policy in their respective states and times.

Index Terms- Keladi, Mysore, State System, Shivappanayaka, Tipu Sultan, Revenue Policy, Land Tenure

I. INTRODUCTION

Keladi Shivappa Nayaka was the ruler of the Keladi Kingdom of the Malenadu region in Karnataka, a feudatory state of the Vijayanagara Empire. The rule of this lineage was started, as per traditional records, by Chowdappa Nayaka, a resident of the village of Pallibaillu near Keladi, in 1499. The important rulers of this dynasty were Sadashiva Nayaka (1530–1556), Chikka Sankana Nayaka (1570–1580), Virabhadra Nayaka (1629–1645), Shivappa Nayaka (1645–1660), and Keladi Rani Chennamma (1672–1697). Among them, the most important ruler was the Keladi

Shivappa Nayaka, whose rule is known for the revenue policy called Shivappa Nayakana Sistu, which is the main topic of our discussion.

The contemporary of this kingdom was the state of Mysore, which was founded by two brothers, Yaduraya and Krishnaraya, in the year 1399. It means that, a hundred years before the foundation of the Keladi Kingdom, the Wodeyars were able to establish their identity. The important rulers of this kingdom were Thimma Raja Wodeyar, Raja Wodeyar, and many more, up until 1947, when this state merged with the Indian Union. During the rule of Krishnaraja Wodeyar II, Haider Ali was appointed as the Dalavai of Mysore State and, within a short period, dominated the entire political circle of Mysore State. Taking advantage of the situation, Haider Ali became the de facto ruler of the Mysore state, and a new era in the administration started. His son, Tipu Sultan, was the most progressive personality of the 18th century. He was influenced by the watchwords of the French Revolution—liberty, equality, and fraternity—and decided to bring social and economic justice to his subjects. With the intention of ensuring the welfare of the subject and state, both have introduced progressive revenue policies, and in this paper, I am going to discuss the progressive elements in their revenue policies.

The land revenue policy is a revenue collection system adopted by a system in which a certain amount of production will be collected from the cultivator as a reward for transferring the ownership of land based on contracts or title deeds. Both Shivappa Nayaka and Tipu Sultan developed a standardized revenue policy in their respective domains, keeping in mind the actual cultivator of soil and the welfare of the state.

II. OBJECTIVES

- (1). To understand the revenue policy of Keladi Shivappa Nayaka and Tipu Sultan,
- (2). To know, is there any similarity between the Shivappa Nayaka and Tipu Sultan's revenue policy?
- (3). To find out the progressive elements or popular elements in these respective policies.

III. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

There are relationships, similarities, and progressive approaches in the revenue policy and land tenure systems of Shivappa Nayaka and Tipu Sultan.

IV. REVENUE POLICY AND LAND TENURE SYSTEM

4.1. Shivappa Nayakana Sistu:

In the line of Keladi Nayakas, the name of Shivappa Nayaka is most important not for his political achievement, but his most systematic revenue policy. His land tenure system was popularly called Shivappa Nayakana Sistu. In later annals of history, his policy is compared with Raja Thodarmal's new system of revenue, known as zabt, and a system of taxation called dahshala. ² In this system, Shivappa Nayaka divided land into five groups based on the fertility of the soil. ³

- 1) The first-grade land, or Uttamam is based on its soil features, like black soil mixed with sand.
- 2) The second-grade land, or Madyamam, is red-soil with little water.
- 3) The third class grade or the Kanishtam, is a mixed black soil with little water.
- 4) Fourth class grade or the Adhamam, it very bad waterless hard soil.
- 5) Fifth class grade or Adhamamdamam, is a barren soil unfit for cultivation.

4.2. Fixation of land revenue: Agriculture was the main occupation of the common man and the main source of revenue for the state. The fixation of revenue was based on the fertility of the soil and the type of cultivation. ⁴

4.3. Land revenue fixation on the cultivation of land
During the Shivappanayaka period, the Vijayanagara Empire-influenced land revenue system was further reviewed and reframed with progress and a responsive revenue fixation and collection system. Before fixation, the responsible officer needed to survey the land and keep a watch on cultivation for 12 years. The yield of soil was valued. Besides this, the officers need to keep documentation of seeds sown and expenditure on cultivation. Every type of soil is measured on sowing capacity called Khanduga which was considered as a unit of land for fixation of revenue. The highest and lowest products of each of the five types of soil will be considered for fixation (average of the highest and lowest for fixation). Every village was surveyed and the land was categorised into the five categories and 1/3 of the total production will be the share of the state. The fixation is applied to the production of grain and other staple crops. Once fixed, the criteria are to be followed till the next review of revenue policy. ⁵

4.4. Land revenue fixation of horticulture products or commercial products.

While fixing land revenue for horticulture crops, different methods were followed. Here, the unit of fixation of land revenue was the total number of trees planted on cultivable land. The 1000 Arecanut trees are considered one unit for fixation of land revenue, and the height of the tree should be 18 feet to levy tax. The assessment was based on the average produce of an Arecanut tree for 10 years. As per inscriptional references, Shivappa Nayaka himself planted arecanut trees in a palatial garden to study the average yield of 1000 trees. Again, 1/3 of total produce was collected as land revenue from the rayaths. The same process is applied to other types of commercial cultivation. The Shivappanayakana Sistu remained a byword till the end of the British period.

5.1. The Revenue policy of Tipu Sultan:

As we all know, the subject of our research was very active in the political arena of Indian history in general, and South Indian history in particular. Mughals were ruling north India, the Vijayanagara Empire was the most important political force in South India. Their revenue policy more or less continued with some modification under their feudal kingdoms of Keladi and Wodeyar. When Haider Ali became the

ruler or administrator of this region, he never thought of making any major changes in the revenue policy, and the Vijayanagara model was again continued with minor modifications. Farmers were under the control of pategars, zamindars, jagirdars, or sometimes state representatives, who collected land revenue from farmers and sent it to the central treasury. That means there was no direct relationship between the state and the actual tiller of the soil. There was a huge possibility of exploitation of farmers by the person responsible for the revenue collection.

Afterward, Tipu Sultan became the de facto ruler of the Mysore state, and during his period, revolutionary changes were made in the state revenue policy. Tipu Sultan had rich experience in land revenue policy as the Jagirdar of Dharmapuri for 15 years, which was granted by his father, Haider Ali. As a Jagirdar, he introduced several reforms in revenue collection and the landholding system, and the same he applied after coming to power.

5.2. Land Reforms

Tipu Sultan initiated many changes in the land tenure system to help the state and tenants. He laid down the following rules in the tenure system:

- 1). Prescribed rules were framed regarding the allotment of land to old and new farmers.
- 2) The land farms were divided into four kinds, based on fertility and irrigation facilities, i.e,
 - (a). Wetland which was irrigated by water sources from the river, tank, well, or pond, and land revenue was generally high on it.
 - (b). Dry land was land that depends on rainfall for cultivation.
 - (c). Hissa land, or the partition of produce, was equally divided between the state and farmers.
 - (d). Ijra land is leased out to farmers for a fixed amount of rent. ⁶
- 3) Landholding was of two types as per the documents, one was hereditary property or Meeras land, and the second was fixed rent land, in which land was owned by the landlord and paid a fixed amount of rent to the state till the next fixation.
- 4) Tipu Sultan started the system of collection of rent in cash from the farmers or the landlord. It was a purely comparative fixation of revenue based on the contemporary market value of grains.

5) Land revenue fixation: one-third of total production was collected from dry land, half from wet land, and from this land, it was generally collected in the form of kind (grains). The quantity of land was measured not based on land but on the grains required for sowing. The term used was "candy," which was different from one place to another. The Candy of land means twenty Kudus, and each Kudus is equal to the regional measurement unit of 20 Seer. The candy of dry land was four times larger than the candy of wet land. For example, the extent of one candy of paddy land was 24 measures; the state's share was 12. For dry land, it was just 8 and the state share was just two candies. A farmer who cultivated both dry and wetland has to pay on average 40% of produce to the state. If we compare this with England, the English farmer had to pay 50% of the produce in different taxes to the state. ⁷

6) Nearly 25 crop varieties were harvested, with the main dry crops being ragi, jari, daal, bajra, horse gram, Bengal gram, and green gram. Rice and Sugarcane were the chief crops of the wetland.

7) Tipu Sultan discourages more than one crop cultivation near the river bank and other irrigated areas to maintain the fertility of the soil. Other commercial crops were areca nuts, pepper, cardamom, Betel Leaves, Mango, tobacco and sandalwood which fetch good revenue to the state and farmers. ⁸

8) The cultivation of wasteland was encouraged by making it tax-free for the first year, half tax in the second year, and starting in the third year, tenants had to pay full tax.

9) Strict instructions were given to the officers not to harass the farmers in the process of collection of land revenue. In his order no.7, Tipu Sultan instructed his officer in these words: " and those who bring marshland and riverine flood lands under cultivation must be encouraged. In these lands, try and extend the cultivation of sugarcane and/or paddy." ⁹

10) The revenue policy was more responsive, farmer-oriented, and justice-oriented. In his order no 11 to the officers, he instructed that "There are canals and wells and dams; have them repaired and start cultivation in the lands around them. Those dams which are in disrepair must be repaired and land adjoining them taken into cultivation. ." ¹⁰

11) His land grant policy was the most judicious one. "As a man of action, with a mission to stop inequality, the concept of 'land grants' became a tool to achieve this purpose.As there were no formal records of

land, in 1786, land was surveyed and records were created, huge quantity of Inam land was recovered and distributed among the landless agricultural labor. ."
¹¹ Tipu also maintained a 'no-caste bar' in his army and allotted land to landless cultivators. ¹²

CONCLUSION

The revenue policy and land tenure systems of Shivappa Nayaka and Tipu Sultan have many similarities. The reason may be that both got their heritage from the Vijayanagara Empire and the Mughal Empire. The land was divided based on its quality into five and four grades, respectively, under them. The first Uttamam of Keladi and the wetland of Mysore were based on irrigation facilities, soil type, and fertility of the soil. Both collected a higher proportion of produce from farmers on this type of soil, which typically accounts for half of the total produce. The second grade of land was Madyamam, based on the availability of water under Keladis and dry land under Tipu Sultan. In general, the state collected one-third of the total production. The third, fourth, and fifth types of land in Shivappa Nayakana Sistu were based on low fertility and sparse rainfall areas. In the same way, Tipu Sultan's gradation of third and fourth types of land was also based on fertility, availability of water, and productivity.

During the Shivappa Nayak period, before the fixation of land revenue, the state system developed a system of machinery by which for 12 years the land was cultivated under strict state supervision and an average of the returns was kept as a basis to fix the revenue on land. Besides this, the land was surveyed and records were maintained in the local government offices of the time. The officer has to collect whatever revenue rate is fixed by mutual contact between the state and the tenants. This shows the state's concern for the farming community at that time. This was the most progressive approach of the Keladi rulers towards farmers and the downtrodden communities of the time. Through this method, they try to mitigate the exploitation of the farmers and the marginalized communities. In the same way, Tipu Sultan also devised a system by which no farmer would be exploited by landlords or state officers. During this period, land tenure was broadly divided into two forms: hereditary land lordship called Meeras, in

which the landlord owns the property permanently and, during the harvesting season, uses it to collect land revenue; after deducting the expenses, the remaining amount will be sent to the state treasury; and in the fix revenue land lordship, the landlord has to pay a fixed amount of land revenue to the state and collect revenue from the tenants as per the guidelines and order of the state. Before fixing land revenue, the land was surveyed and detailed records of the land were kept. The land was measured based on the number of grains sown on the land. This unit was called "candy." One candy was equal to twenty Kudus, and each Kudus was equal to the present day's 20 Seers. On fertile land, the rate of land revenue was ½ of the total production, and on other landforms, it was 1/3rd or 1/6th of the production. Land reforms were introduced, and unauthorised land grants were confiscated and distributed among the landless laborers. While redistributing the confiscated land, more concern was given to the principle that the tiller should be the owner of the land. The policy adopted by Shivappa Nayaka and Tipu Sultan was the most progressive policy towards the farming and downtrodden communities of time.

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