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THE ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEMS OF MADURAI SOUTH FOREST DIVISION

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ABSTRACT

Madurai, the second largest city in Tamil Nadu, has been one of the most flourishing Centres of South India. The city is believed to have had its beginnings over 2500 years ago. According to legends, Madurai and its surroundings was a thick jungle called Kadambavanam, and it was the heart of legendary and the Capital of the

famous Pandyas Kingdom from the 5th century BC., to the end of the 11th century AD. The famous Historian K. A. Nilakanda Sasthri said that Pandyas ruled Madurai as their capital even in the age of the Ramayana. Kiskindha Kanda, of the Ramayana refers Kapadapuram of Pandyas mentioned in the Tamil legends of the three Sangam. Madurai is frequently called Athens of South India, on account of the classical beauty of the Architecture of its numerous temples.

KEYWORDS: Modern Administration, Forests Acts, Administrative set up, Conservators, Divisional Forest Officers, Range Officers, Section Officers, Beat Guards, Working Plans, etc.,

INTRODUCTION

Forests the main source of maintain-



ing environmental balance is gradually fading and it is indispensable to prevent this destruction of nature's gift. Since the forest deposits a large quantity of wealth, a systematic exploitation should be made in order to meet the human needs. During the nineteenth century, the Government of India was able to notice the destructions of forests, while it had a clear knowledge about its absolute importance to humanity. So steps were taken to conserve and utilize it. Here the aim of the research is to carry out the essential administrative systems of Madurai South Forest Division.

METHODOLOGY:

A special forest policy was framed and an act was passed. This culminated in the formation of a separate Forest Department for the Administration of Forests. One of the administrative unit of Tamilnadu Forest Department is the Madurai South Forest Division which comprised the forest areas in the Southern part of forests in Madurai. For the present study both Analytical and Descriptive methods have been used.

The modern forest administration was introduced in India by the British Government which overshadowed the management of forest by a few forest officials. In order to given a sound and effective administration, Government have passed suitable rules and regulations and issued orders in various times. The Madurai Forest Division is now under the 1882 Tamil Nadu Forest Act, which had been amended in several time according to the needs. The categorical administrative classification make the forest administration an effective one. Working plans are prepared in regular time intervals aiming at continuity of forest policy and action. Thus the efficiency of the forest administration depends directly on the adequacy of the forest laws, Calibre of the Professional forest services and the Preparation of the working plans.

MODERN ADMINISTRATION

Prior to the nineteenth Century, there was no legislation for an organized forest administration in India.¹ Knowing the need for the conservation and management of the forests after a systematic investigation on the availability of teak timber in the Malabar region, British Government appointed Captain Watson as the First Conservator of forests in Madras Presidency in 1806 and he temporarily looked after the administration.² It was only in 1855 an outline of permanent Programme of forest administration of India was drawn up. This outline laid down the ruling principles of management of State Forests viz., a state property and in consequence, all trees living or dead were made public propertities to which individuals had no right or claim.³ In order to execute this ruling principles, in 1864 Sir Deitrich Brandis, the First Inspector General of Forests in India was appointed and he is called the Father of India Forestry. Forest administration in India dates from his period. In the same year a separate Forest Department was created and Brandis become the head of the Department. The State Forests of India have since been organized, administered and developed.⁴

The Forest Department was in the first instance placed under the Secretary in the Public work Department and in charge of the Honourable Member of that Department. In 1871 it was made part of the newly constituted Department of Revenue and Agriculture.⁵ On the abolishment of this Department in 1879, the forest business was transferred to the Home Department, but retransferred in 1886 to the Department of Revenue and Agriculture which had been re- formed in 1881.⁶

During the period between 1871 and 1900 considerable progress was made in forest administration. Because in this period the India Forest Act, 1878 was passed. Subsequently Tamilnadu Forest Act, 1882 was also passed. Besides for the first time Indian forest Policy was enacted in 1894 by the British Government.⁷ With a view to regulate the working of the forest department, legal steps were taken by the government. As a result forest laws were passed.

FOREST ACTS

Brandis realized the necessity for a separate forest enactment not only for affording protection to the forests, but also for bringing them under proper management with adequate authority vested in the officers of the Forest Department. He consulted this matter with Cleghorn, his Assistant and took steps to draft a regulation. Thus under the initiative of Brandis, the Indian Forest Act of 1865 was

enacted. Under this Act, the local governments were empowered to draft local rules for enforcement of this law in their respective regions.⁸ This Act was not applicable to the Madras Presidency since there existed forest conservancy laws in Madras as early as in 1856. The Madras forest Department worked under these conservancy laws till 1882. The Madras Government created a jungle Conservancy Department with the dual control of both Forest and Revenue Department.⁹

After this in 1822 Madras Forest Act was passed and it was renamed in 1953 as the Tamilnadu Forest Act 1882.¹⁰ This Act made provisions for the protection and management of forests in the State of TamilNadu. By this Act, forest areas in Tamilnadu were constituted either into Reserved Forests or Protected Forests.¹¹ This TamilNadu Forest Act of 1882 was later amended several times until 1965. The Madurai forest area is being administered under this amended Act.¹² After the enactment of this Act forest settlement is actively in progress in the Madurai Forest Division. Time to time Government issued orders to make general rules and regulation for the better management of reserved and unreserved lands. Regulation were issued in 1894,¹³ 1904,¹⁴ 1920,¹⁵ 1928,¹⁶ 1933,¹⁷ 1939,¹⁸ etc.,

ADMINISTRATIVE SET UP

Forests are treated as the Property of the states under the Indian constitution and come under the State List. In 1976 they have brought under the concurrent list for better direction by the centre. Yet the centre has generally advisory power in forest matters. The forest matters are included under the Ministry of Agriculture in the Central Government. But the State Governments have separate Forest Departments. The Central Board of Forestry where all the Ministers of the State Forest Departments are members, decides all the policy matters regarding the forests in the country. At the State level the department is looked after by the Minister alone or he may have Minister of State and Deputies and a secretary to administer the forests.¹⁹

For administrative convenience, the forest area in TamilNadu is divided into four circles and the Madurai circle is divided into two divisions- Madurai South Forest Division and Madurai North Forest Division. The Madurai South Forest Division, which is under the present study, is subdivided into nine ranges and again these are sub- divided into forty one sections. The lowest administrative division of the Madurai South Forest Division is called Beats.²⁰ There are one hundred and four Beats in this division. Other than these divisions, there are special divisions for particular works such as working plans, forest utilization, fodder and pasture development, silvicultural research, forest engineering and survey, functioning directly under the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests.²¹

The administrative staff of the division consisted of a Divisional Forest Officer and an Assistant Conservator of Forests. The executive and protective staff included six range officers, forty one foresters, one hundred and four forest guards and one hundred and five reserve watchers. The ministerial staff consisted of one head clerk, one accountant, three assistants, two typists, two draughtsman and one permit clerk. The other staff includes fourteen peons, one truck cleaner, two tanahdars, two fire watchers, two office watcher, one truck driver and truck cleaner. Now the numbers of workers may be increased.²²

Duties of the Executive Officers and Chief Conservator

Government appoints a Chief Conservator of Forests to look after the administration of the whole forest areas in Tamilnadu which comprises four circles including the Madurai circle. After 1988 he was renamed as Principal Chief Conservator of Forests. He is recruited through Civil Services Examination conducted by the Union Public Service Commission and gets training from Imperial Forestry College at Dehra Dun.²³ He is the Professional advisor to the Government in all the matters

relating to forestry and the department. He deals on his own authority with professional questions such working plans, silvicultural operations, fire protection generally and with matters regarding which powers have been delegated to him.²⁴ In regard to all purely professional matters, the Principal Chief Conservator of Forest is the controlling authority over the Conservators and in regard to other matters, he in the position of an advisor is being consulted either by the Commissioners or by Government as the case may be. The Commissioners before passing orders to Government have the option of consulting the Principal Chief conservator. All order passed by Government on forest matters is communicated to the Principal Chief Conservator. The Principal Chief conservator of forests communicated directly and personally with Government whenever he considers it necessary to do so.²⁵ He controls all sales of government timber, arrange for indents and supplies, such as railway and defence needs, supervises the collection of all economic products and the conduct of forest research in communication with the president of Forest Research Institute.²⁶

He has the power to grant lands on patta to the landless scheduled caste people.²⁷ He has to consolidate the budget and to give appropriate proposals for consideration of the Government and to prepare the consolidated forest administration for the State. He also makes tours of periodical inspection in the forests.²⁸

Conservator is in administrative charge of the circle. Madurai circle has its own conservator. He is also selected through Civil Service Examination and gets training in Imperial Forestry College at Dehra Dun. He is responsible for the preparation of working plans, for the supervision of all forest works, for the control of establishments for expenditure of advances for works, and of contracts, sales and supplies and for the general management of the forests in the Madurai circle. Conservator is immediately subordinate to the Chief Conservator of Forests in all professional matters and in other matters are subject to the orders of the revenue Commissioners who have the option of consulting the Chief Conservator.²⁹

DIVISIONAL FOREST OFFICERS

The Divisional Forest Officer (D.F.O.) is responsible for the administration of Madurai Forest Division. He possesses direct control over the forest establishments in the Madurai Division. The Collector, as head of the District, possesses general supervision over the Forest of Madurai district. This Madurai Divisional Forest Officer obeys any orders which the Madurai Collector may issue. The Collector may call for any paper or information from the Divisional Forest Officer.³⁰ The Divisional Forest officer is an assistant to the Collector and subject to his orders in questions where forestry practice affects popular interests. He arranges for exploitation, regeneration and protection of forest according to sanctioned working plans and other orders. He conducts sales, enters into contracts, supplies material to departments and the public realize revenue and control expenditure.³¹ Communications on all matters in which the Forest Department comes in contact with the people such as forest settlements, rights and privileges including grazing afforestation, reservation, games rules, timber transit rules, formation of forest panchayats the supply of firewood for the Public, etc., pass through the Commissioner and the Collector and the Madurai Divisional Forest Officer issues only routine orders in these matters.³²

FOREST RANGER OFFICERS

Each of the eight range in the Madurai Division have own Range Officer. The rangers are responsible for the efficient management of their ranges, the condition for proper custody of all government property and the discipline of all forest subordinates in their charge. They are responsible

for carrying out their work with the help of their foresters and forest guards and according to the orders of the Divisional Forest Officers. They are in-charge of their work such as marking reservation, felling of trees, transport of timber and fuel, construction of roads, buildings, wells, protection of forests and investigation of important offences, submission of accounts to the Divisional Office and issue of passes and permits.³³ They are responsible for proper arrangements for the protection of forests and conduct of the works in it during the absence of subordinates and for the execution of sanctioned works at proper time. A Forest Range Officer is expected to spend at least twenty days in each month in camp.³⁴

Foresters or Section Officers

In Madurai Division more than forty Foresters are working. They are getting training at Tamilnadu Forestry Training School, Vaigai Dam. Their duties are protection of forests, investigation of offences, issue of transit or way and other passes, collection of grazing fees and compensation for offences and inspection of forests. Foresters are responsible for all work in their sections. They should instruct the best Guards in all their duties. They should see the Report Books of Beat Guards from time to time and report any negligence on their part.³⁵

BEST GUARDS

One hundred and four Guards were employed in Madurai Division. The Beat Guards are to protect all forests in their Beat. They should prevent illicit cutting of trees must submit first report immediately on discovery of a forest offence and try to trace the offender and if found, take him to the nearest police station within 24 hours and give necessary help to the section or range officer in conducting the enquiry. They must detect and report illicit shooting and fishing in reserved forests. They shall frequently inspect fire stations or climb a tall tree to look out for fires in the fire season, burn fire lines in good time, collect Villagers and put out forest fires. They must know the names and addresses of all contractors working in their beats. They must keep forest rest houses and other buildings in his charge together with the compound in repairs, clean and protect from damage.³⁶

WORKING PLANS

In any field of human endeavour, fore-thought and advance Planning are not only desirable but also advantageous.³⁷ When it comes to the forestry, the need for planning of management is even greater, because here one deals with a crop which may take many decades to mature and within that period of maturity itself, harvestings have to be arranged in stages at long intervals and have to be so distributed, throughout that, the production is not only maximum but also well-sustained. This cannot be achieved without keeping some sort of continuity of policy in management. To ensure this, it is necessary to prepare and to follow a written plan of management which the foresters call a working plan.³⁸

After passing the Madras Forest Act in 1882 most of the regular forest areas were demarcated, settled and notified as reserved forest. Nearly all of them were mapped by the survey of India between 1888 and 1900. During this period, the working was regulated by a system of licence and voucher. Under this system, hundreds of men entered the forests daily, cut under no regulation so long as they paid the fees and they caused immense damage. At the same time, numerous officials had to be employed to issue permit, check them and recover the dues.³⁹ Thus the need for departmental working began to be keenly felt. Besides, goats were free to enter the forests and there was no restriction on large scale irregular fellings, to make charcoal for smelting iron ore, etc. But no scheme or working plan was prepared, however, for regulating the working of the forests.⁴⁰ The year 1890 marked the abolition of loose permit system and the recognition of the necessity for exploiting the forest resources under

regular working plans based on principles of sustained yield, which is the starting point of working plan era.⁴¹

The working plan which is written for each forest division deals with all kinds of management required within the division.⁴² Forest is managed as per the provisions of a sanctioned working plan. Generally, the working plan envisages for the management of Government- owned forests.⁴³ Working plan is a written scheme of management , aiming at continuity of policy and action and controlling the treatment of forests. The working plan is written after considering the condition of forests, its capability, administrative convenience, demand for the forest produce, local customs, effect of past treatments, etc.

The working plan is prepared by the conservator of each division and approved by the Chief Conservator of Forests. It also gets Government sanction for implementation. In the latter period after the foundation of silvicultural research centres, the planners prepared working plans on the basis of the findings of these institutions. For the Madurai division, a Silvicultural Research Centre is working at Kodaikanal from 1959 onwards.⁴⁴ A working plan is generally prescribed for a period of ten years and is revised from time to time.⁴⁵

The first working plan in Madurai District was Prepared by Mr.Portar. In 1900 this working plan was sanctioned.⁴⁶ For the treatment to forests under the working plan prescriptions, forests were separated into different working circles. Ribbontrop, in his memorable Report of 1900, referred to the above success saying: "This was one of the epoch making events in our forest history".

Mr.Porter's plan was revised by H.B. Bryant and which was sanctioned in 1907. This working plan reduced the annual output of fuel into Madurai city and lopping for manure leaves.⁴⁷ But his plan resulted in increase of price of fuelwood. So the public submitted petition to the Government in 1913. In response to it, the Government asked .C.Wilson to prepare a working plan. His plan was sanctioned in 1916. Wilson tried in his plan to increase the output of fuel from 12,000 tonnes to 21,000 tonnes from the government forests. But Wilson's working plan covered only Sholavandan and Natham Ranges in Madurai South Forest Division.⁴⁸

The next working plan was prepared by N. S. Ghate for the period from 1949- 50 to 1964 -65. During his plan period a number of changes took place in Madurai Forest Division.⁴⁹ Ghate's working plan was revised by K.R. Radhakrishnan for the period from 1959-60 to 1968 -69. His plan contained ten working circles with used exploitative works. The next plan was written by C.Pavithran, I.F.S., for the period of ten years from 1971 to 1981. In his plan he proposed eight working circles which dealt with not only Exploitation or Harvest of Forest produce but also regeneration or reforesting the worked up areas.⁵⁰ The next plan was prepared by K.K. Somasundaram for the period between 1981 and 1991.⁵¹ During his plan period again changes took place in Madurai Forest Division.⁵²

CONCLUSION

In this way working plans were prepared for each ten years by the I.F.S., officers and sanctioned by the Government of Tamilnadu for Madurai Forest Division. Through this working plans Madurai Division Forest were managed and administered by the Indian Forest Service Officials. Forest revenue go into the general exchaquar. They cannot be directly used for financing forestry operations. Expenditure is based on budgets, sanctioned each year. Each division has to prepare Annual plan of operations based on the working plan prescriptions. On the basis of Forest Schedule of Rates etc., a Budget Estimate for the division for the next financial year is prepared and submitted to the Principal Chief Conservator Office in Madras. When the Budget Estimate for whole Forest Department goes to the Government, it was sanctioned with some changes. For implementing some schemes, efforts were

made by the concerned administrative officials to get financial allocation from the Central Government Budget.

Forest, which is essential to meet the basic needs of the people, should be administered well. So the Government by passing legislations empowered the forest officials with suitable powers which enable them for a successful perfection of their duties. Besides, working plans are basic instrument for their administration. State and Central Governments also allot money every year to meet the expenditures of the working of the forest department.

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