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HISTORICAL DYNAMICS OF JAGIR SYSTEM AND VOLATILE AGRARIAN RELATIONS IN NIZAM PERIOD

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ABSTRACT :

In recent years there has been a great deal of writing on the economic and agrarian society to a large extent to our understanding of the evolution of peasant society. It may be pointed out that there is detailed and concrete historical research into different regions. However, the available studies reveal that the performance of Indian agricultural economy varied from province to province the devotement of agriculture varied from region to region. This paper also discuss the different types of Jagirs that existed in the Hyderabad state (Nizam Dominion).

Jagirdari system

- The officers of Mughal Government received their salaries in two ways:
 - Cash from the State



- Granted *jagirs* (collected and enjoyed the land revenue equivalent to the amount of their salaries)



KEYWORDS : Historical Dynamics , Jagir System and Volatile Agrarian .

INTRODUCTION

Jagir is a Persian word, and means "holding land". The word is derived from ja meaning "place", gir meaning "keeping, holding". A jagir was technically a feudal life estate, as the grant reverted to the state upon the jagirdar's death. However, in practice, jagirs became hereditary to the male lineal heir of the jagirdar. The family was thus the de facto ruler of the territory, earned income from part of the tax revenues and delivered the rest to the treasury of the state during the Islamic rule period, and later in parts of India that came under Afghan, Sikh and Dogra rulers. The jagirdar did not act alone, but appointed administrative layers for revenue collection. These positions, according to Shakthi Kak were called Patwari, Tahsildar, Amil, Fotedar, Munisif, Qanungo, Dewan and Others.

In recent years there has been a great deal of writing on the economic and agrarian society to a large extent to our understanding of the evolution of peasant society. It may be pointed out that there is detailed and concrete historical research into different regions. However, the available studies reveal that the performance of Indian agricultural economy varied from province to province the devotement of agriculture varied from region to region. The princely state of Hyderabad with its vast area, plentiful resources and a large population, different ethical and administrative divisions, some larger than the average Indian states, legitimately entitled it to the traditional name of 'The Dominions of His Exalted Highness': It covered an area which was more than the area of England and Scotland put together.

The lands in the Nizam's Dominions were held under different type of tenures. In the first place certain lands were managed by the Government directly, the revenues from which went to the Government exchequer.

All though more than 50% of the total area of the territories belonged to this category only. Lands under this category were known as the Diwani or Khalsa lands. Secondly, certain lands were owned by the Nizam the revenue from which went to the Privy Purse, such lands were called the Sarf-e-Khas lands. Third category mention may be made of the lands which were granted by the state to individuals who enjoyed the revenue from such lands wholly or partially. These lands belonged to the category of jagirs and inams etc.¹ The presence of powerful Jagirdars some of whom belonged to royal families also acted as an important limitation to the absolute powers of the Nizam. Jagirs was a tenure in which the public revenues of a given tract of land were made over to a servant of the state, together with the powers requisite to enable him to collect and appropriate such revenue and administer the general government of the area. The assignment was either conditional or unconditional. Illiteracy, ill-health, poverty and low productivity form a vicious circle which in turn, leads to economic underdevelopment.

Covering about forty percent of the total area, Jagirs occupied a position of pre-eminence in the Nizam's Dominions. The origin of the Jagirs which to begin with, was in the nature of military tenures may be traced back to the practice of the Mughal emperors. Because of their peculiar position as conquerors in a foreign country the Mughal emperors thought it convenient to control the territories through military chiefs in whom they had confidence, by appointing them to be incharge of large tracts of land. In fact even under the earlier Hindu system chiefs were appointed to manage crucial territories such as the frontiers and mountain tracts. In any case the Mughals adopted the plan of granting military officers. The right to collect the revenue of a certain area of the country who used the money so collected to maintain a body of troops to be made available for the royal service whenever needed such grants have come to be known as Jagirs. Thus for the purpose of these grants the Mughal territories could be divided into two distinctive parts. The first, consisting of land that was directly managed by the officers of the emperors, and the rest being available for assignment as Jagirs.

There is an interesting background to the origin of the Jagirs in the Deccan. The Famous historian Gribble described the origin of the Jagirs under the Nizam's thus: It appears Asaf Jah had brought with him from Malwa a number of trusted followers, both Mohammedans and Hindus who were attached to his person and fortunes. The granted Jagirs or estates on military tenure to the Mohammedan nobles and employed them as his generals. His Hindu followers were employed principally in the administrative work of the important departments of revenue and finance. Such administrators were also granted Jagirs as remuneration for their services. All the Jagirs whether granted for civil or military purpose came to be regarded as hereditary.²

Gribble also mentions in his book *The History of Deccan* about the existence of large number of indigenous Rajas and chiefs whose territories were scattered over the country. Most of them held sanads or grants from former kings many of which had been confirmed by the Nizam on payment of tributes. Starting from the grant of the first jagir in 1135 F (1726 A.D.) by the first Asaf Jah almost up to the end of the last century, Jagirs were granted in the Nizams territories, Records reveal that the last Jagir was awarded in 1299F (1889-90 A.D) during the reign of Mir Mahboob Ali Khan. No systematic method or principle was followed by the Nizam in the grant of Jagirs. Consequently Jagir villages were scattered all over the map of Hyderabad, resulting in several Jagirdars having their villages located in half-a-dozen different regions separated in space by other jagir or Diwani areas and sometimes lying at a distance of hundreds of miles from one another. Such a system had caused insurmountable difficulties both for the Jagir administrators as well as the ryots. To represent their grievances the Jagir ryots had to travel incredibly long distances to the headquarters of the revenue staff.

Under Timur, Jagirs were awarded for a period of three years to begin with and the country was inspected at the end of the period. If the territory was found in a flourishing condition with a contented peasantry the Jagir was continued. Otherwise the Jagirdar was punished by withholding from his subsistence of the three following years.³ Thus, it appears that the grant of Jagirs was originally meant for definite period, not extending in any Case beyond the lives of the grantees and was resumable. In course of time 'it was thought below the dignity of the ruler to resume' benefits once granted and so the grants became permanent and hereditary.⁴

Another factor which perhaps influenced the award of hereditary jagirs was the grant of Inams for religious purposes on a permanent basis. Thus the practice of granting small holdings of land free of revenue for

religious and charitable purposes on hereditary and permanent basis was widely prevalent not only during the reign of the Hindu but also under the Mohammedan rulers. With the grant of Jagirs on a hereditary basis vested interests became so strong that sometimes the Jagirdars were also not amenable to the control of the Nizam, especially during times of economic difficulties.⁵

When Salar Jung-I assumed office, attempts were made to resume Jagirs awarded by ministers based on money transactions and not bestowed under the order of the Sovereign. Such grants were considered to be illegal and often the result of corrupt transactions. In an attempt to resume jagirs, held by Sahukars obtained by them through money transactions from the ministers, as a first step Ramaswamy's Jagir was marked for resumption. However he resisted the attempt on the basis that the transaction involved an amount of Rs. 2 to 3 lakhs. The contract between Siraj-ul-Mule and Ramaswamy was executed in a very peculiar manner. "The lease was handed up to Ramaswamy by the Resident through the inter-medium of the Brigadier".⁶

Strangely enough while the Resident desired the disposition of Jagirdars like Sultan-Nawab-ul-Mulk. He did not express the same view in case of Mudaliar. This attitude provoked a correspondent to make the following observation with Englishmen in 1848. Some persons have managed to obtain Jagirs by taking advantage of the weak financial base of the Government and the corrupt practices prevalent at the level of the ministers. An interesting feature relating to Jagirs is that the big jagirdars who considered themselves to be semi-independent rulers. Their area granted small jagirs to their followers and even to some members of their families, which were in the nature of sub-jagirs.⁷

The various types of Jagirs that existed in the Nizam's Dominions may be listed out under the following heads:

- 1. Paigah:** Otherwise known as Jagirat-i-Nigehdast-Jamait was a kind of military Jagir originally assigned by Nawab Nizam Ali Khan Bahadur to Abdul Khair Khan, Nawab Shams-ul-Umra, Amir-i-Kabir for the maintenance of a body of horse. His majesty's Household troops and hence they were designated Paigah Jagir.
- 2. Maqas:** Next to the Paigah rank the maqas which were the jagirs granted to important nobles by the Nizam. Out of nine maqas four belonged to the premier nobles which were known as Umra-ee-Ozzam. These belong to Nawab Salarjung, Nawab Khani Khanan, Nawab Fakhr-ul-Mulk and Maharaja Sir Kishen Pershad.
- 3. Altumgah Jagir:** The Turkish word Altumgah comprising of the words 'Al' and Tumgha both of which signified the royal signet. It was permanent perpetual and hereditary grant and the right or interest conveyed. It was not transferable by sale, gift, bequeath. Altumgah jagirs were held in highest esteem and were considered special marks of honour and favour for the grantees.
- 4. Jat Jagirs:** Were grants of large areas of land for the maintenance of the grantees without any obligation whatsoever of any service in return. Most of the Jat jagirs were personal in nature and were originally intended for the life time of the recipients. The Nizam's Government felt that it was beneath its dignity to take back what it had donated and hence in course of time jat jagirs became permanent.
- 5. Mushrooti Jagirs:** Were granted for the performance of some definite service whether religious, civil or military, which were continued only so long as the conditions of the grant were fulfilled.
- 6. Tankha Jagirs:** Were grants of revenue made over to meet the salaries of the grantees for services rendered to the Government. In this regard they resemble Paigah Jagir. But Tanka Jagirs were of a later origin and most of them were not legitimate. They came into existence at a time when the state was involved in pecuniary difficulties and the military chiefs called Zamindars insisted on obtaining Government taluqs as guarantee for the regular payment of their establishment and paying the troops from the proceeds.
- 7. Chauth Jagirs:** During the early stages of their conquest the Marathas levied the conquered territories 1/4 of the revenue derived from the land revenue called chauth When such territories came under the Nizam's Government after the pindaris were vanquished the chauth which the jagirdars paid to the Marathas was continued to be paid to the Nizam as such jagirs were known as chauth paying jagirs.
- 8. Mocassa Jagirs:** Like chauth Mocassa was peculiar to the Marathas revenue system. It was the name given to the portion of land revenue devoted to some special purpose or maintenance of some chief and the grantee was known as Mocassarar. Lands and villages which were paying Mocassa to the Marathas came under the Nizam's they were styled as Mocassa Jagirs.

9. Samsthans: While other jagirs had their villages scattered over entire dominion the Samstanams existed as large and compact units. The samsthans which were fourteen in number belonged to Hindu rajas who were holding their lands since a long time before the first Nizam came to the Deccan. They were recognized by the first Nizam on the condition of an annual payment called peshkash out of the total fourteen samsthans only five big samsthans viz., Gadwal, Wanaparathi, Jatprole, Amarachinta and Palvancha were exempted from the Diwani Jurisdiction.⁸

CONCLUSION

In late 1945, there started a peasant uprising in Telangana area, led by communists. The communists drew their support from various quarters. Among the poor peasants, there were grievances against the jagirdari system. The Nizam's former Hyderabad state had a feudal structure of ad-ministration. In the jagir area, the agents of the jagirdar who were the middlemen collected the land taxes. There was much of op-pression by the jagirdar and his agents. They were free to extort from the actual cultivators a variety of taxes. This condition of ex-ploitation remained in practice till the jagirdari system was abolished in 1949.

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