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## Colonial policy and agricultural development programs during the dewanship of K. Sheshdri Iyer in princely Mysore

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### Abstract

This research paper refers to colonial policy in princely Mysore and agricultural development programs of Dewan K Seshadri Iyer. The Data collected for this paper is from primary sources. The overall objective of this research paper is to study about the agricultural development programs such as revenue collection, irrigation development, establishment of agricultural banks introduced in princely Mysore during Dewanship of K Sheshadri Iyer.

**Keywords:** Seshadri Iyer, Mysore, Agriculture, Instrument of Transfer, Famine, Rendition, Irrigation, Marikanive Project, Spinning Mill

### Introduction

Mysore was the third largest Indian state in colonial India. In 1900, its population was around 50 lakhs, 90% of whom lived in agricultural villages. Of the two main springs of the economy of Princely Mysore, agriculture and industry, agriculture is the more vital. Agriculture is the main occupation of the people and it is the basis of rural economy and cottage industries. Science and scientific knowledge, development of transport and communication, trade and commerce have revolutionized the domain of agriculture. More than half the populations of Mysore are agriculturists or peasant proprietors. The wheels of industry, banking and transport depend on the agriculture of the state. After the rendition many improvements programs have taken place in the field of agriculture.

Three and a half decades of continuous efforts by Mummadi Krishna Raja Wodeyar to regain the royal power that the Mysore kingdom had lost in 1831 finally bore fruit. His adopted son Chamaraja Wodeyar X was proclaimed as Maharaja of Mysore on 25 March 1881. The British government signed a charter with the Mysore Wodeyar, to empower the Mysore lords, who were under direct colonial rule through commissioners, to start indirect colonial rule. The British government signed a charter (instrument of transfer) with the lords of Mysore. According to it, the Mysore State agreed not to change the system of administration which was in possession and to pay 35 lakhs of rupees as a tributes per annum to the British and accepted the other terms of subsidiary alliance system. "The Maharaja of Mysore shall at all times conform to such advice as Governor-General in Council may offer him with a view to the management of his fiancés, the settlement and collection of his revenues, the imposition of taxes, the administration of justice, the extension of commerce, the encouragement of trade, agriculture and industry and any other objects connected with the advancement of His Highness' interests, the happiness of his subjects, and his relations to the British Government"<sup>[1]</sup>.

The colonial economic policy before 1881 did not aim at economic development in a more qualified sense. It was confined to safeguarding the revenue by keeping the irrigation system and the transport system in order, and at the most – trying to stimulate the growing of commercial crops. The attitude towards the economic problem changed significantly after 1881. This change was, however, due to the continued colonial control, gradual, and only in 1912 is it possible to speak of a real breakthrough. It is nevertheless possible to speak of a significant change of attitude after 1881, which is clear from the following statement by the first Dewan C. V. Rangacharlu: "The old idea that India must confine itself to agricultural produce is giving way to the more correct theory that no country can prosper unless its agricultural and manufacturing industries were equally fostered.

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The ordinary routine of administration is not the only subject which requires our notice. The development of the various industries on which the prosperity of the country is dependent equally demands our consideration”<sup>[2]</sup>.

The post of Commissioner was abolished and the post of Diwan was reinstated. In 1881 Diwan C Rangacharlu took over as Diwan. At this time, the administration of Mysore state had to face the challenging tasks of keeping the British indirect colonial policy agreements, annual tribute to the British, the impact of continuous famine in the state since 1874. For the economic progress of the state, Diwan C. Rangacharlu took a loan of rupees 80 lakhs from the Central government at 5% interest and maintained the administration by austerity, wage reduction, military expenditure without imposing new taxes due to the drought situation.

Seshadri Iyer, succeeded Rangacharlu and had the unique distinction of having served the princely state of Mysore as the Dewan for the longest period from 1883 to 1901. During his time, several development programs were implemented for economic progress. A lot of progress was made in the field of agriculture and industry. In 1886, gold mining began in Kolar. Seshadri Iyer also gave immense encouragement to the agricultural sector and implemented new programs to achieve economic progress. Development programs like revenue collection, irrigation development, establishment of agricultural banks, agricultural credit etc, are important. He meticulously codified the revenue lands in the state and started agricultural banks to help the land owners and cultivators who had to depend on loans from private parties at higher interest rates. He also undertook cleaning of water tanks - desalting, etc., to improve irrigation and better water storage<sup>[3]</sup>.

Fear of famine, serious financial problems and continuation of the Railway Project were the main tasks facing Sheshadri Iyer when he took over as Dewan. Measures to provide against a recurrence of famine occupied the foremost place in his policy. Railways and irrigation works were recognized as the most important agents to this end. He paid great attention to irrigation and the Marikanive project, under which Vanivilas Sagar was established. Famine's toll was so heavy on the State that it might take another 50 years for the State to recover from it. Agricultural operations in the State depended upon rainfall which was known for its uncertainty and there was a remote chance of increase in revenue. Improving irrigation was a major policy matter for the Dewan since the threat of failure of rains loomed large. “We cannot absolve ourselves from the fact that there are a large number of tanks that are in complete ruin,” the Dewan told the Representative Assembly. The Ryots and the government must take steps to jointly manage such tanks. “Any reform in our tank system must start with a clear recognition of the fact that it was beyond the ability of the Government to undertake the repair and maintenance of all tanks with any ultimate benefit in revenue; nor would it be equitable to throw the burden on the ryots after the village system or what little remained of it had been disorganized; and after the ryot had been tacitly relieved of his responsibilities by imposition of special cases for the repair of tanks,” he said in his Assembly Address<sup>[4]</sup>.

For the management of the tanks, Sheshadri Iyer made the following arrangements:

1. Tanks yielding more than Rs.500 as revenue were to be taken care of by P.W.D. There were 790 such tanks.

2. Those yielding less than Rs.500 as revenue were to be taken care of by the village itself under the responsible control of the revenue officer. In the latter case, the ryots were to be relieved of paying irrigation cess at the rate of one anna per rupee of the revenue.
3. In case the villagers did not manage the tank, the government itself was to undertake the responsibility of handing over the tanks to private persons and collect ¼ of revenue (chautay).

Following discussion of these ideas in the Assembly, it was decided to try this in seven Taluks. The tanks' current revenue cap of Rs. 500 will be reduced to Rs. 300, it was decided. For the purpose of caring for these (already mentioned) tanks, a new branch of the Public Works Department was established. The Cauvery, Hemavathi, Kabini, and Lakshmana Theertha canals were all overseen by this section, as were all the irrigation and restoration projects<sup>[5]</sup>.

The Marikanive Project under which the Vanivilas Sagar and Chamarajendra Reservoir at Hesaraghatta were developed to supply drinking water to Bangalore were two important works of this period. For the first time, telephones were used in the State to give instructions from Bangalore on the flow of water into the main pipeline from the reservoir.

The Marikanive Project planned to construct a dam across the Vedavati River in Chitradurga district was started in 1898 and was completed in 1907. The Dewan had to face a lot of severe criticism over starting it, though it irrigated a vast area in Chitradurga district (and at present irrigates 10,000 hectares of land). The reservoir is named after the Regent Queen as Vanivilas Sagar and raised near the Marikanive village in Hiriyr taluk with a length of 1,300 feet and a height of 162 feet from the deepest bed. The reservoir spreads over 21,460 acres. Two channels from the reservoir, one of the lengths of 29 miles and another of 30 miles were excavated. The lake has a holding capacity of 30,000 million cubic feet of water. The Mavattur tank was repaired at a cost of Rs.2.81 lakhs. The Mirasabihalli tank and the Parashuramapur tank were also repaired, each costing more than Rs.2.50 lakhs<sup>[6]</sup>.

Ryots received loans for the purpose of digging irrigation wells at a minimal interest rate. Loans were obtained for 917 and 550 wells in the districts of Kolar, Tumkur, Chitradurga, and Bangalore, with a projected irrigation capacity of 5,225 acres<sup>[7]</sup>.

The Land Revenue Act of 1888 gave the Government, a wide power in the matter of revenue collection. This act gave greater power to the revenue officers to confiscate the cultivated land of a farmer who could not pay the tax. Due to this action, the percentage of revenue collection increased. With the expansion of agriculture, there was a high demand for agricultural land, so the farmer was not ready to give up his cultivated land. As mentioned in the Ryotwari system, the farmer was the owner of the land only for those who paid a fixed revenue<sup>[8]</sup>. As the farmer became the owner of the land, agricultural expansion and development was encouraged.

A Department of Agriculture and Statistics was formed at Head –quarters of Government in 1886. The establishment consisted of a director and two clerks. The office collected statistics from Districts relating to rain-fall, extent of cultivation of different crops, the annual estimated quantity

of their yield, trade, manufacture, and cattle stock. The yearly statistics under these heads were tabulated District wise, and 12 returns embodying the information were submitted to Government every year. The Five years statistical tables are printed in the Appendix<sup>[9]</sup>.

Regular scholarships were awarded every year to students joining the Madras Agriculture College so that they could return with better ideas to improve agriculture in the State. In 1890 the Dewan announced that an increased number of agricultural scholarships was to be given to the Mysore students proceeding to the Madras Agricultural College for study on condition of their carrying on agriculture on their own lands and farms after completing their course of instruction. It was thereby the hope of government to create agricultural centers on improved principles in different parts and by that means to bring about a gradual and steady permeation through the community of information respecting improved methods of agriculture and other industries connected with it<sup>[10]</sup>.

Malnad's supari and betelnut garden owners received extra support for maintaining their current gardens and establishing new ones. Beginning in 1887, new gardens had to pay four annas per acre in revenue for the first 12 years, followed by a three-year period of progressive assessment. Soppinabetta rights were acknowledged in 1891, allowing people to collect leaves from nearby government forests<sup>[11]</sup>.

The first mill started in the Mysore State at Bangalore was in the year 1884 now known as the Mysore Spinning and Manufacturing Mills. The next mill started was in 1887 under the designation of the Bangalore Woolen, Cotton, and Silk Mills. These Mills were started with local capital and large concessions were given by the Government in the shape of suitable sites and facilities for water supply<sup>[12]</sup>.

Although this industry was established with the objectives of economic development, trade, and railway development, it also encouraged the development of agricultural products such as cotton and silk, which were the raw materials needed for industry. These crops were commercial crops also. Seshadri Iyer encouraged commercial crops by setting up industries. It increased the revenue of the state from agriculture, industry, and trade sectors.

An Agricultural and Industrial Exhibition, the first of its kind, was held at Mysore in October 1888, immediately after opened to the public by Maharaja. Exhibits were sent in from Punjab and from the Native States of Travancore and Rewa. There were more than 30,000 exhibits. Almost all the exhibitors attended in person and had an excellent opportunity of improving their knowledge of the agricultural products of Southern India in general and Mysore State in particular<sup>[13]</sup>.

In 1891, the Agricultural Bank program was launched. Except for people who already held current deposits from earlier transactions, the existing Exchange Banks did not accept deposits from other individuals. Other people's deposits bore no interest. The new Bank was created to make it easier for farmers and gardeners to deposit money and obtain loans for agricultural use. If deposits were not forthcoming, the government offered to make loans available at advantageous rates. Farmers were spared from stamp and other duties while pledging their land. The program protected farmers from the grasp of high-interest private money lenders by educating them about the advantages of doing business with banks<sup>[14]</sup>.

In the year 1894, the Mysore Government promoted a new

breed of banks styled as Agricultural Banks. These banks were mainly meant for extending agricultural credit to the poor farmers at a cheaper interest and to save the peasants from exploitation by the money lenders. The number of banks newly established was 6 in 1895-96, 18 in 1896-97, 36 in 1897-98 and 2 in 1898-99. total number of banks was 64. These banks were confined to 34 taluks of the state, the remaining 34 taluks not yet possessing any banks<sup>[15]</sup>.

The dealings of the banks amounted to Rs.4,02,288 under Receipts and Rs. 4,09,829 under Disbursements. The net amount due to the banks by their members, inclusive of previous years' dealings but exclusive of interest, was Rs. 13,68,617 while the net amount due by them to Government and to depositors was Rs. 13,55,471. The Reserve Fund at the end of the year amounted to Rs. 21,489 against Rs. 14,529 at the close of 1897-98. 28 out of the 63 banks received deposits during the year, against 20 in 1897 -98, and the net amount of deposits held by the banks was Rs. 11,240 at the close of the past year as against Rs. 5,820 at the close of 1897-98. The members of these Agricultural Banks, who have pledged their united credit, own immoveable property of the aggregate value of Rs. 50,41,637<sup>[16]</sup>.

The financial position of the State was improved during the long tenure of Sheshadri Iyer's Dewanship and the State's total revenue was 91.03 lakhs in 1882-83. By 1886-87, the total revenue rose to 127.5 lakhs. By the close of his administration in 1901-02, it was 189 lakhs. This was due to various steps taken by the Dewan Sheshadri Iyer such as expanding irrigation, implementing new agricultural programs, encouraging industries, extending railways and securing income from the gold mines.

In the indirect colonial policy of the British in the Mysore State, the administration and development programs which was implemented by Dewan K Seshadri Iyer in the field of agriculture, proved to be very beneficial for the development of agriculture in the Mysore State. This increased the land revenue generation of the state. Some development programs have benefited the development of commercial and horticultural crops in Mysore State. Especially Agricultural and Industrial Product Demonstration and Agricultural Development Banks were instrumental in the initiation and increase of commercial and horticultural crops. In Agricultural sector, programs including commercial and horticultural crops in Mysore led to financial growth and increase in state revenue. This encouraged the British to pursue a policy of indirect colonization and the admiration and support of the people of the state and the British authorities.

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