



LAND REFORMS LEGISLATIONS IN TAMILNADU (1948-1971)

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Abstract:

After independence, the Government of India took some reform measures for the eradication of social injustice and the improvement of economic status of the agricultural society. The Zamindari and Mirasi rights were eradicated and consequently the government brought some of the Acts. The Tamil Nadu Government took suitable legislative measures step by step to implement the policies advocated by the centre, and the recommendations of the Planning commission since independence. Minimum wages act 1948 This Act was brought up by the Tamil Nadu Government in 1948. The Thanjavur district administration implemented it in the district. Under this Act, the wages payable to the agricultural labourers and the pannaiyals were fixed, their wages as per the Mayiladuthurai Agreement dated 28.10.1948, which specified daily wages for men and women in addition to 1/7 of the gross produce for all the various agricultural operations in which the pannaiyals. Thanjavur Pannaiyal Protection Act 1952, after independence, the agrarian unrest came to Thanjavur District. The relationship between the landowners and tenants on one side and tenants and farm labourers on the other became much strained. This resulted in displacement of tenants and dismissal of farm labourers which ultimately culminated in agrarian crimes and social atrocities.

Key Words: Minimum Wages Act 1948, Thanjavur Pannaiyal Protection Act 1952, Tamil Nadu Cultivating Tenants Protection Act 1955, Tamil Nadu Land Reforms (Fixation of Ceiling on Land Act, 1961

After independence, the Government of India took some reform measures for the eradication of social injustice and the improvement of economic status of the agricultural society. The Zamindari and Mirasi rights were eradicated and consequently the government brought some of the Acts. The Tamil Nadu Government took suitable legislative measures step by step to implement the policies advocated by the centre, and the recommendations of the Planning commission since independence. Some of the major acts are as follows:

(i) Minimum Wages Act 1948:

This Act was brought up by the Tamil Nadu Government in 1948. The Thanjavur district administration implemented it in the district. Under this Act, the wages payable to the agricultural labourers and the pannaiyals were fixed, their wages as per the Mayiladuthurai Agreement dated 28.10.1948, which specified daily wages for men and women in addition to 1/7 of the gross produce for all the various agricultural operations in which the pannaiyals should engage themselves according to the needs of their land lords. Two marakkal paddy for every adult male workers and one marakkal of paddy for adult woman worker.

Apart from the daily wages, a crop share called threshing floor is mentioned in the Act. Also, this Act gave the right to the pannaiyals that they can move to a conciliation Officer or Revenue Court for justice. The pannaiyals who traditionally worked under their pannaiyars could not speak against their land lords. They were treated as slaves. This Act gave some rights to the pannaiyals in entire Tamil Nadu but mostly reflected in Thanjavur District. After this act, the illiterate people prepared themselves to fight against the pannaiyars.

(ii) Thanjavur Pannaiyal Protection Act 1952:

After independence, the agrarian unrest came to Thanjavur District. The relationship between the landowners and tenants on one side and tenants and farm labourers on the other became much strained. This resulted in displacement of tenants and dismissal of farm labourers which ultimately culminated in agrarian crimes and social atrocities. The agrarian unrest took political overtones. Hence, a meeting of the agrarian leaders on both sides was held along with Government Officials by Kala Venkata Rao.

This meeting was held at Mayiladuthurai and a settlement was arrived as an Agreement. The provisions of this agreement became Thanjavur Tenants and Pannaiyal Protection Act.

In 1955, the Tamil Nadu Government brought an Act known as Protection of Civil Rights. This Act gave protection to the civil rights of the agricultural labourers and the pannaiyals in Thanjavur district. According to this act following section:

- ✓ Pannaiyals will be paid daily Wages at one marakkal and women labourers at 3/4 milrakkal.
- ✓ For harvesting kalavadi, chindumanj, sattuve, nadaval, kalavadi, arid other items, Pannaiyals will be paid 1/7 of the gross produce of the plots on which they have worked as pannaiyals.
- ✓ The 1/7th share will be split up and the kalava'di will be fixed at if marakkals out of 14 and harvest cooly at half-a-marakkal out of 14.
- ✓ Where the pannaiyal exclusively harvests the field, he will get 1/7th of the produce.
- ✓ Where the pannaiyal harvests part of the field, he will get 1/7th of the produce harvested by him.

- ✓ Where outside labour has harvested certain areas and the pannayals certain other areas, the pannayals will get 1 ½ marakkals out of 14 as kalavadj, irrespective of what cooly is paid to outside labour.
- ✓ To prevent pannayals from claiming their snare and working elsewhere, a penalty of two marakkals for each day of willful absence during the harvest season will deducted out of the kalavadi or other dues to him.
- ✓ Each on the pannaiyal will get his share only on the yield from not more than one veli(6-2/3 acres) of land belonging to the mirasdar

(iii) Tamil Nadu Cultivating Tenants Protection Act 1955:

The Madras Cultivating Tenants Protection Act, 1955 protects the tenants from eviction, with retrospective effect from 1st December, 1953. Revenue Divisional officers have the power to receive complaints and pass orders. Under this Act, four categories of complaints are mentioned (i) eviction (ii) resumption by owners (iii) lease continuance, and (iv) Restoration to tenants of lands can be filled.

In a period of 12 years since the enactment, of the Act, the total number of disputes filed was 18,683 of which 11,513 were disposed, 5812 withdrawn, and 1358 pending. There was a fairly quick disposal. The government has not set up any adhoc machinery for the enforcement of this Act which is entrusted to the regular Revenue and Judicial Officers.

(iv) Tamil Nadu Cultivating Tenants (Payment of Fair Rent) Act 1956:

The Cultivating Tenants Protection Act necessitated the regulation of the rent payable by the tenants and settlement of disputes. Hence this Act was enacted. Ceiling rates of fair rent were fixed for wet lands. The owner of the land is eligible to get the fair rent fixed for wet lands. It was fixed as 1/5 of the straw and stalk. The land owner pays the land revenue and other dues on the land, while the tenant bears the expenses of cultivation. Rent courts have been established for deciding disputes.

(v) Tamil Nadu Land Reforms (Fixation of Ceiling on Land Act, 1961):

Objectives of the Act:

- ✓ Reduction of ownership of agricultural land to reduce glaring inequalities of income.
- ✓ The maximum-extent of land that a person may hold as prescribed in the law.
- ✓ The ceiling on land includes persons as either owners or a usufructory mortgage or as a tenant or as an intermediary or in one or more of those capacities.
- ✓ The provision of the Act was made applicable to the whole of the state of Madras (Tamil Nadu).
- ✓ The Act prevented future acquisition of agricultural land.

The Act took retrospective effect from 6th April 1960 and is a self contained code defining all incidences connected there to. The ceiling limit on land holding was originally fixed on the basis of the number of members in the family.

The ceiling was 30 standard acres for a family of 5 members with an additional five standard acres for every additional member of the family, subject to an overall ceiling limit of 60 standard acres.

In 1961, the Tamil Nadu Land Revenue Reforms committee declared 23,000 acres of surplus land and the latest official estimate expects a surplus of the order of 70,000 acres. In that, 7000 acres declared as surplus land in Thanjavur District alone. Later it was increased.

(vi) The Tamil Nadu Public Trusts (Regulating of Administration of Agricultural lands) Acts 1961:

Religious institutions and public trusts own vast areas of cultivable lands as part of the agrarian reforms. The act fixed the ceiling of 20 standard acres for direct cultivation by institution and trusts. A cultivating tenant can have not more than five standard acres for his family, both owned and tenant lands put together. The authorized officers and special Deputy Collectors (Revenue court) take action for resuming surplus lands held by tenants or heed benami for others.

(vii) The Tamil Nadu Occupants of kudiyruppu (Protection from Eviction) Act 1961:

This Act protects the interest of persons occupying kudiyruppu as on 31st March 1959 from eviction of their kudiyruppu by their landlords under section 3(1) of the Act. The life of the act was three years in the first instance, and then it was extended from time to time till 29th November 1973. Government then decided to reenact this act permanently with retrospective effect on and from 29th November 1973 and the Act 23 of 1975 was enacted accordingly.

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