



Development of Agriculture Under Kakatiyas

Sk.Nasimali

Research scholar, Dept. of Ancient History,Culture&Archaeology
Sri Venkateswara University, TIRUPATI-517502,A.P

ABSTRACT

The Kakatiyas of Warangal occupied a place of paramount importance and interest in the history of South India in general and that of Deccan and Andhra in particular. They were the next to establish their sway over the entire Telugu speaking area after the fall of the Satavahanas and before the rise of the Vijayanagara empire. They presided over the destinies of Telugu speaking people from the tenth century A.D. to the first quarter of the fourteenth century A.D. The period can very well be styled in the medieval history of Andhra country as the "The Age of the Kakatiyas of Warangal"

The Kakartiya rulers paid much attention to land management and development of agriculture. They had excavated a large number of canals and constructed tanks. Many of the tanks and lakes at present supplying water to some thousand of acres in the Telangana region were originally the works of the Kakatiyas. They attempted to increase the extent of the cultivable land by clearing forests and bringing large tracts of fresh land under the plough. Land was surveyed and measured. Cultivable land was classified into two types namely wet and dry. The government took sufficient care for the proper upkeep of the tanks and canals. Annual repairs of the bunds, removal of silt deposits on the bed and repairs of the canals and sluices are the main items of maintenance they undertook. Thus, the Kakatiya age witnessed the development of agriculture and prosperity.

With Orugallu (Warangal) as capital, the Kakatiyas ruled over the Telugu country from about A.D. 1150 to 1323 A.D. They occupied a place of paramount importance and interest in the history of South India in general and that of Deccan and Andhra in particular. They were the next to establish their sway over the entire Telugu speaking area after the fall of the Satavahanas and before the rise of the Vijayanagara empire. The period of Kakatiyas can very well be styled in the medieval history of Andhra country as "The Age of the Kakatiyas of Warangal".The Kakatiyas devoted much of their energies in promoting agriculture and safeguarding the land.

It is an admitted fact that population in general was not so dense in ancient and medieval times as at present. The feature is more predominant in the Deccan. Most of the villages in those days were primarily the settlements of peasants who under the beneficence of the concerned chiefs brought as much land as possible under the plough. The topography of the region provided innumerable streams, small and big, which were harnessed to fill the tanks for irrigation purpose. Therefore, the kings and their dependents had necessarily a tough task before them, in clearing the jungle for cultivation with the co-operation of the people. Founding of new villages in the region at suitable places with water resources became more necessary during the Kakatiya period. Several villages in Andhra desa named Ganapavaram , after Ganapatideva, Rudravaram after Rudradeva and Muppavaram after Muppamamba have come into being by reclamation of the waste and forest lands by the respective kings and queens of the Kakatiya family. To construct a village in those days was a pious deed. Similar was the sanctity attached to the digging of a tank.

KEYWORDS

Promotion of Irrigation

Ganapatideva's preceptor Visvesvara Sivacharya according to one of the Tripurantakam inscriptions ¹ from Prakasam district, purchased some forest land for 850 gadyanas and after clearing the forest constructed a village named Visvanathapura with a tank for the worship and offering to the god. An inscription found in the village Parada in Nalgonda District, dated A.D. 1144 records the creation of an agrahara of the same name where shares of land were assigned to several brahmanas, setti, boya and some to the temple with the specific condition that the donees should neither leave the place nor sell away their shares, but they themselves should remain there and see the village prosper.²The lands in these village were exempted from paying taxes such as Siddhaya, ari and koru. Such incentives were granted in those days for the promotion of new settlements, reclamation of land and agriculture.

It was in the Kakatiya rule that the Deccan received proper attention in creating irrigational facilities. Divine prosperity is always there in Hindu ethics attached to the construction of tanks which in several codes is mentioned as one of the sapta santanas or seven deeds of everlasting virtues. The Kakatiya administration there seems to have been no special department or an officer to look after the works of irrigation. Most of these works like construction of temples, tanks and build-

ings were generally looked after by the ministers and subordinate chiefs. The Kakatiya kings themselves constructed some tanks. Prola I, according to the Motupalli³ and Bayaram inscriptions excavated a tank named Kesari-tataka after his famous title ari-gaja-kesari i.e lion to the elephant like enemies⁴ Ganapatideva according to the Telugu work Pratapa charitra built several tanks at places like Nellore, the Telugu Choda capital, and at Ganapuram in Krishna District. Reference to the tanks named Ganapa samudra are of frequent occurrence in the inscriptions of this period and such tanks are believed to have been constructed and they irrigate some thousands of acres even today.

The most important piece of work in the construction of a tank was always the erection of an embankment strong enough to withstand the pressure of the water impounded in it. This was a comparatively easy task and naturally involved less trouble and expense in the hilly tracts than in level country. Unfortunately no details of the means adopted by the tank builders in the accomplishment of their task are described in any records of which we have knowledge. There is reason to believe that, in some cases at least they directly employed labourers and paid them wages in cash. In an inscription dated Saka 1215 at Tipurantakam in the Prakasam district, it is stated that the construction of a tank called Kumara samudramu involved an expenditure of 241 madas whilst two

other tanks, both named Tripura samudram, cost 7 madas and 156 madas respectively.⁵

The government took sufficient care for the proper upkeep of the tanks and canals. Annual repairs of the bunds, removal of silt deposits on the bed and repairs of the canals and sluices are the main items of maintenance. We find numerous records which appoint certain persons for this purpose. Those persons are granted an income called dasavandha levied on the cultivators generally at the rate of one kuncha per each putti of the gross yield.⁶ It is generally called putti kuncha or cheruvu kuncha. There is another kind of remuneration called dasavandha manya. Some land irrigated under the tank is assigned to the tank keeper as manya.

Cultivable land was classified into two types, namely wet and dry. The lands which are irrigated by rivers, rivulets, tanks, canals and wells are called nadi-matrikas. Wet land is again sub-divided into paddy growing land or nir nela and garden land or tomta nela. And the lands which purely depend on rains are called nature fed or deva matrikas. Dry lands or deva matrikas are those where crops like millet, sesame, indigo, mustard and castor were grown which depended only on scanty rain fall. Forests and pastures (Bidu) were rather more proportionate in extent than the two types of arable lands. Lands brought under the plough are called achchukattu lands⁷ which included both wet and dry lands. The term achchukattu denotes that the land was liable for levy of tax generally called ari by the government.⁸ An inscription at Katakuru dated S 1225 records a monetary gift at the rate of one visa or 1/16 of a ruka on every marturu included in the achchukattu land as god's share. Here the levy is specified for each kaaru either it be in Karttika or Vaisakha season.⁹ Indirectly the specification furnishes the information that achchukattu lands are those which are brought under the plough and surveyed systematically for the purpose or taxation.

It is well known fact that methods of agriculture were almost the same as we find them till recent days before the introduction of mechanized farming. The indigenous tools and bullocks were used. According to the harvest seasons the lands are called Karttika and Vaisakha lands. Some lands are cultivated in the first season of the South-west monsoon which yield the crop in Karttika and the second type of lands in the winter season to yield the crop in Vaisakha or summer. They are called tru garu or irupu lands. Auspicious occasions for sowing the seeds or commencing the new agricultural year or beginning the new harvest with regard to wet as well as dry lands, have been ceremoniously observed from early days. The two occasions generally fall on Eruvaka Punnama or the full moon day of the month of Jyeshtha i.e. in the month of June, when the South-west monsoon sets in and the seasons becomes suitable for sowing the seeds. This is the main festival for the cultivators to begin the new year.

Reclamation of Land

The Kakatiya rulers not only took interest in providing irrigational facilities for the improvement of agriculture, attempted to increase the extent of cultivable land by clearing forests and bringing large tracts of fresh land under the plough. According to Kaifiyats in which local tradition preserved of several villages refer to the deforestation of much of area by command of Prataparudra and to the foundation of new villages on land

they reclaimed from woodland and wild jungle. When Prataparudradeva marched against kayasta chief Ambadeva, he ordered Irugappa Ketu Nayaka one of the officers in his service to cut down the forests near Kochcherlakota located in the Prakasam district and to build there the village of Duppipadu, modern Dupadu. An officer of the king's court called Srinatharaju of Anumakonda was placed in charge of this township. Likewise the country to the west of the Srisaila mountain corresponding to large part of the existing Nandikotkur of the Kurnool district of today was also at that time covered by dense forests which were cleared at the instance of the king, and several new villages were founded in the open spaces thus created. Officers in his service were appointed to look after the promotion of agriculture and provision of security. Similar accounts are related in the Kaifiyats regarding the foundation of a large number of villages in the Kadapa, Kurnool, Prakasam, and Nellore districts; these all bear the testimony to the real and intense interest taken by Kakatiya rulers particularly Prataparudradeva in increasing the area for cultivation which in turn paved the way for the strengthening the economic resources of his kingdom.

However it was not always easy to find people to migrate to the newly founded villages and settle there. To make people and entrepreneurial farmers to migrate to newly founded villages the Government encouraged by granting special privileges to the emigrants. They were allowed to cultivate the land at first for a term of three years free from the payment of any rent or fiscal charges, from the fourth year onwards taxes were levied at low rates which were gradually raised year by year until they came up to the level of those obtaining in the older established villages. With the construction of a tank and providing other infrastructure like temple, road connectivity the formation of a full-fledged village is completed.

Crops.

Paddy was the staple crop in all parts of the kingdom as it is today. The irrigational facilities provided by the numerous tanks, canals of small magnitude along the streams were by no means insignificant in those days. Every village in fact was self sufficient with regard to food grains, rice as well as other grains like millet, ragi, saija jonna etc. An incomplete kavya of an unknown author found on the hillock near Hanmakonda, describes the lands of Andhra as golden in colour with the riped paddy fields looking like the Meru mount of gold.¹⁰ All kinds of millets were grown in the veli or dry lands. Wheat, green gram, black gram, horse gram and some of the other husked grains were also cultivated and grown in the fields.¹¹

Thus the Kakatiya age witnessed the reclamation of land, foundation of new villages, promotion of irrigational infrastructure and adoption of systematic land survey paved the way for the development of agriculture. It helped in turn to strengthen the state economy.

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