

AGRICULTURE IN MEDIEVAL ANDHRA DESA (1000-1600)

YALALA PRAVEEN KUMAR

MPhil in CSSEIP from HCU

Independent Research Scholar

chinna.praveens@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Agriculture is an important factor of economic history of Andhradesa. Land defines the economics of utilization of natural resources and thus is much more than the mere terra-firma. It includes all the materials and forces, which nature gives freely for man's use in land and water, in air and light and heat. The medieval Andhra was ruled by three eminent dynasties viz., the Kakatiyas, the Rayas of Vijayanagara and the Qutb Shahis. All the dynasties prudently developed and encouraged the construction of lakes, 105 wells, canals and dams seeking not only celestial benefits and salvation but also to raise the revenue to the state.

Andhra desa:

Andhra desa region is gifted with so many man made lakes, wells, canals, dams, etc., since early medieval time to later medieval time (A.D. 1000-1687). The medieval Andhra was ruled by three eminent dynasties viz., the Kakatiyas, the Rayas of Vijayanagara and the Qutb Shahis. All the dynasties prudently developed and encouraged the construction of lakes, 105 wells, canals and dams seeking not only celestial benefits and salvation but also to raise the revenue to the state.

The Medieval rulers of Andhra Desa

The Kakatiya were the foremost rulers who took special interest to promote irrigation facilities by constructing tanks different sizes and storing water flowing waste in the natural streams. The topographical features being very congenial in Telangana for such endeavour as tanks could be easily constructed by rising dams across the streams where they pass through small hillocks. The surplus water flows again in the same stream and again utilized to form another tanks at another convenient place. In this way, we notice a chain of tanks along the course of even a small stream. Taking lead from the Kakatiyas and their subordinates the subsequent Muslim rulers also encouraged tank irrigation at several places. We can illustrate this with a few inscriptions which throw considerable light on the irrigation system of the period under review.

Telangana was known for its tanks of which some tanks were natural and some were man made. During period of Kakatiya, the constructions of lakes were regarded as one of the Saptasantanas. Generally tanks were dug or constructed in between two hills wherever it was convenient to store every drop of water in down areas by outlining with mud and rocks. These constructions were followed by their royal personages. 106 The following table shows different irrigational facilities made by the Kakatiya kings, their family members and their chiefs in the Telangana region. The particulars of construction of water facilities are mentioned below which are based on inscriptions

Major Agricultural works in Medieval Time

Vijayanagara rulers also constructed many tanks, ponds, dams, wells and canals. They brought waste land or barren lands into cultivation in the Rayalaseema region. Vijayanagaras also competed to score sacred benefits by providing the water facilities as provided earlier by the Kakatiyas in medieval Andhradesa.¹ In addition, to the Kakatiyas and Rayas of Vijayanagara the Qutb Shahi Sultans also constructed and reclaimed tanks, wells, canals, etc., in the kingdom of Golconda. Qutb Shahis also followed the example of their predecessors. Along with the rulers the sub-ordinate officials too followed their masters examples and contributed to the prosperity of the country in their own way by constructing water storages at every suitable place.ⁱ

Besides these constructions of new tanks, the rulers and nobles not only maintained the tanks but also encouraged the repairs the old tanks, breaches, wells, streams and canals by giving dasabundha inams, shares and exemptions for the promotion of the agricultural products and the enhancement of land revenue. Dasabundha means making an Inam (gift) about on tenth of irrigated land under particular tank or canal to the person who under takes the construction of a tank, and also the contribution of one tenth of the production of each measurement of grain from cultivated land in the catchments area was meant for the up keeping of a tank. This obligation was different under the Kakatiya rulers. the person who was appointed for the purpose of maintenance of tank or canal was granted an income called Dasabundha levied on the cultivators, generally at the rate of one kunch per each putti of the grass yield. It is generally called as putti kunch or cheruvu kuncha. This remuneration was turned into dasabundha manya. Some land irrigated under the tank was assigned to the tank keeper as manya or inam which became hereditary property as mirasi land. The grain collected was spent on the repairs and up keeping of the concerned tankⁱⁱ. The Reddy kings and Vijayanagara kings practiced this system prior to the Qutb Shahi period.ⁱⁱⁱ

Agricultural works during Qutb Shahi

Several inscriptions of Qutb Shahi period reveal dasabundha or dashabandham one tenth of the land irrigated by the waters of a particular tank or canal was given to those who were put in charge of construction or repair of a particular tank or canal was not only to protect by repairs but also its maintenance. Such land was termed as the dashabundha manyam^{iv}. Such encouragement took the form of either dasabundha or kattu kodage grants, according to which the person who undertook or executed the work was given a piece of tax free land for tank which he constructed.^v The maintenance and repair of irrigation canals under a tank, includes maintenance of bound sluice, tanking out silt and repairing and canals with the collected grain. There are inscriptions with instructions for renovation of deepening the tanks and raising the height of the bunds. In certain places the income from lease fishery, set separate and utilized for the repair of the tank. It was followed under Vijayanagara kings as possible encouraged private institutions and people to develop the Kudimarmattu that was practiced under the Vijayanagara rule. Repairs to irrigation tanks, canals and drainage works which were a local custom had to be performed by joint labour of the village community, where ever a new tank was constructed, at the same time, the settlement was done by the local administration.

The Panagallu inscription gives the details of the construction of a dam across the Musi river near Namile (was known as Indupukesaseema), to divert the water through a canal into Udaya Samudramu tank at Panagallu, situated near Nalgonda present the district headquarters. Udaya Samudramu was renovated by expanding the sluice and canal. The canal was diverted and regulated into the river Krishna^{vi}. The canal was link to various small and big tanks on its way from Namile to river Krishna. This fact bears ample testimony to the existing practice of construction of balancing reservoirs. This Udaya Samudramu tank was known as Udayaditya Samudramu, constructed by Kandukuri Choda king, a feudatory of Kakatiya of Warangal. The king Udaya Choda Maha Raju ruled between A.D. 1136 to 1176. B.N. Sastry given the details of tanks filled by this Musi canal. Panagallu inscription of Qutb Shahis belonged to A.D. 1560 Rahmatullah who under took the renovation work on the order of the king Ibrahim Qutb Shah of Golconda. This inscription states the obligation of dashabandam one tenth of produce of each measurement of grain produce to be paid as maintenance tax from land irrigation under this river canal. The dashabandha is mentioned in another inscription, found near a village tank at Mukthewaramu in Narsaraopet taluq Guntur District. Teja Khan Khudavand laid this inscription in A.D. 1678, during the reign of Abul Hassan Tana Shah, while renovating the tank. The inscription states that all the beneficiaries of this tank should pay according to dashabandhamu, which would be collected and used for maintenance and repairs of the tank.

Permanent arrangements were made for repairing and up keeping of the tank from time to time. Allure Kaifiyat describes that the floods of the river Krishna swept off the Allure tank. Foujdar of that region renovated the bund and renamed it as Jamalkatta. He made an arrangement to collected a Khandika (a measure of grain) from a palla (12 seers or 10 khandikas a palla) of grain which was produced in the catchments are, "The tax obtained from such collection was to be spent for the maintenance of the tank, can be paid either in cash or kind". Another inscription from Vellulla, Metpally Mandal in Karimnagar District records that his Muttalleque Dalapathi Raya constructed the sluice of the Nagula Cheruvu on the orders of Jagadeva Rao, a velama chief in the A.D. 1630, with the same dashabandhamu^{vii}. Kandukuri inscription of Qutb Shahi mentioned that the vaddera community people were appointed as neeratikavili, to look after the irrigation tank in the village. Those were looking after the village tank for its renovation, repair taking out silt and also maintained the canals to irrigate the tail end lands in catchments area. The neeratikavali were provided with mirasi lands for the extension of their services. Even today the neeratikavali are seen in most of the Telangana villages

Madanna had created many irrigational sources to facilitate improved cultivation and enhanced production. Other officers followed his examples and contributed to the prosperity of the country in their own way. Sayyed Meera Hussain of Cuddapah paragana had established a new village Meerapuram on his name and constructed Meerapuram tank. Meer Mohammad Mohsin of Gandikota not only constructed a big tank but also excavated an irrigational canal in accordance with Madannas desire. Abul Fazal mentions Chah-Kan (well diggers) and Ghota Khur (divers who cleaned wells) in the list of the workers connected with house construction. In addition, a Mughal painting at Fatehpur Sikri complex reveals, a saqiya, a Persian wheel. That the saqiya with its rope-chain fitted with water pots, and gear

mechanism operated by bullocks, was a widely employed device for drawing water for the use in places like agricultural, horticultural, lands and large houses. In at other cases labourers used to bring water in leather bags and earthen pots which is already discussed above. The same saqiya system (drawing water system from the well) also used in Golconda kingdom and Asaf Jahi Hyderabad States. At the same time J.B. Tavernier also called Hyderabad as Baghnagar, the city of gardens.

Naturally the Qutb Shahi rulers and other nobility were lovers of flowers and fruit gardens and encouraged gardening throughout the kingdom. Every palace of Hyderabad, it seems, had a spacious courtyard with flower and fruit gardens with its own water supply. For example Golconda Fort had a clay pipes for hot and cold water supply. Likewise, these gardens also might have possessed water channels and pipelines to bring water from tanks and wells. J.D. Thevenot described the pipes of water system at Bagh Lingampally that “to be seen is a great reservoir of Tanqui, each side where of is above two hundred paces long, in it there are great many pipes that rise half a foot above water and a bridge up on it raised about a foot over the surface of the water and above six foot broad, with wooden rails. This bridge is four score paces long and leads into a platform of octagon figure in the middle of the reservoir, where there are steps to descent into the water. There are pipes in the eight angles of it and in the pillars of the rails, from whence the water plays on all sides, which makes a very lovely sight. Further the same French traveller also noted the water supply system to Charminar from Jalpally lake. Water was pumped through pully method which draws the water buckets by bullocks. From the above statement, we can understand that the Qutb Shahi elite government used to lay out the earthen pipes to supply water with pully system for their buildings with their own technology. Further, one cannot see any Qutb Shahi building without a garden in their regional period. On the basis of contemporary records viz., inscriptions, foreign accounts, etc., it can be said that Golconda kingdom had full of water resource which are essential for the growth of agriculture. In addition to this the Sultans of Golconda also adopted several policies for the development of irrigation and agriculture. As a result the kingdom became one of the economically prosperous kingdoms in South India. Madanna had created many irrigational sources to facilitate improved cultivation and enhanced production. Other officers followed his examples and contributed to the prosperity of the country in their own ways.

Sayyed Meera Hussain of Cuddapah paragona had established a new village Meerapuram on his name and constructed Meerapuram tank. Meer Mohammad Mohsin of Gandikota not only constructed a big tank but also excavated an irrigational canal in accordance with Madanna's desire. Most of the volumes of Kaifiyath reflect the chaotic conditions of those days. They are also full of instances where Madanna and his team of officers were seen rehabilitating deserted villages and establishing new villages. Rehabilitated villages were given to cultivators on half of the assessed land revenue. The first two years of madanna's rule were prominent from the point of village rehabilitation and establishing new villages. He seems to have believed that a peaceful village is the basis for the prosperity of the country. He worked hard and incessantly to make the kingdom once again prosperous and peaceful. There was disorder and confusion in Golconda Karnataka area. This area was known as Qibla-patti in government records. Madanna requested the

monarch to undertake again, an extensive tour of the kingdom to appreciate the results of reforms introduced, to understand the reaction of the commander to these changes and to acquaint himself with the line of thinking of the rural population. The king accompanied by the prime minister toured the country extensively in 1676, for about three month. The king and the Deevan had personally seen the improvements and understood the needs of the people. During the earlier tour villages were gifted as inams, agraharams and lands were donated to mosques and temples. Kaifiyaths, contain the copies of these gifts by the monarch and hukumanamas from Madanna. There is a detailed discussion in regarding the gifts to Cuddapah mosque and Chennakeshava Swami temple.

Reference:

1. *Mohammad Yaqoob Ali, Development of Agriculture and Industry in Golconda, Ph.D. Thesis, Kakatiya University, Warangal, 1998.*
2. *Parabrahma Sastry, The Kakatiyas, Andhra Pradesh State Archaeology, Hyderabad, 1978, p. 208.*
3. ¹*V. Appa Rao (Ed.), Reddy Sanchika, Andhra Pradesh State Archaeology, Hyderabad, 1991, Appendix – Inscriptions No. III, pp. 452-453. Soma Shekara Sharma, History of Reddy Kingdoms, Part-II, pp. 372-373. Parabrahma Sastry, Op.Cit., p. 208*
4. ¹*Veeresham, "A Note on Irrigating System under Reddy Kings", in Osmania Journal of Historical Research, Hyderabad, March, 1997.*
5. *T.V. Mahalingam, Economic Life in Vijayanagara Empire, Nuri Press Ltd., Madras, 1951, p. 52*
6. ¹*B.N. Sastry, Golconda Charitra – Sasanamulu, pp. 210-211.*
7. *Inscriptions of Karimnagar District, Andhra Pradesh State Archaeology, Hyderabad, 1974, pp. 119-120.*