



ECONOMIC CONDITIONS IN THE MEDIEVAL HISTORY OF SOUTH INDIA

DR. M. ESTHER KALYANI ASIRVADAM

Reader in History
St. Theresas's College, Eluru
West Godavari District [AP] INDIA

ABSTRACT

The People in Medieval India Pursued diverse range of economic activities to earn their basis livelihood. The sphere of their works varied from agriculture to artisanal Production, trade and commerce. These activities underwent various changes throughout the course of this period. The History of the Southern part of India covers a span of over far thousand years. During these years south India witnessed rise and fall of a number of dynasties and empires.

THE KAKATIYAS :

In the History of Medieval Andhra, the Kakatiyas played a very significant role. The credit of uniting all Telugu people goes to them. They struggled hard to keep the south away from the Muslim onslaught. The Kakatiyas are said to have entered Andhradesa as generals of the Rashtrakutas. The earliest known member of the dynasty was Gundaya who assisted the Eastern Chalukyas.

Kakatiya epigraphs bear testimony to the economic development witnessed by Andhradesa due to the cumulative effect of the steps taken by the Kakatiya rulers. The Kakatiya kingdom flourished with prosperity. They promoted agriculture, and converted forests and barren lands into cultivable lands. They constructed lakes and tanks, maritime trade and commerce was revived. Macro polo refers to diamond industry at Golkonda and economic prosperity of the country, land revenue was the chief source of income. The other source of income were the

DR. M. ESTHER KALYANI ASIRVADAM

1Page



taxes levied on trade and industry. Tax was collected in cash and kind. Kakatiya rulers paid much attention to irrigation. The most important tanks built by the rulers for the purpose of irrigation are Pakala, Palampeta, Lakkavaram and Kesamudram. Amirkhusrū also refers to the economic prosperity of the Kakatiya kingdom.

VIJAYANAGARA EMPIRE:

The empire of vijayanagara played a remarkable role in the medieval history of South India.

The Vijayanagara empire was founded in 1336 resisted the Muslim expansion into South India successfully for about three centuries. The rulers of Vijayanagara fought with the Bahmani Sultans incessantly. Their efforts preserved the purity of Hindu institution in South India. According to Robert Sewell the two brothers named Harihara and Bukka were the founders of Vijayanagara empire.

Land revenue formed the main source of state revenue. The land was carefully surveyed and assessed according to its quality. Different rates were levied on dry and wet lands, and the state claim went upto $1/3$ or $1/2$ of the licences of various kinds, transit and market dues, judicial fines were also in existence. The foreign travelers and ambassadors paid rich tribute to its wealth and splendor. According to Abdul Razaq all the inhabitants of the country wore jewels and ornaments in their ears, around their necks, arms, wrists and fingers. The king's treasury was filled with molten gold, forming one mass, plenty of commodities were available at cheap rates.

The state followed a wise irrigation policy and encouraged agriculture. There were numerous tanks under which large tracts of land were cultivated. Various industries were encouraged by the state.

There was brisk inland and foreign trade. Calicut, Goa were the important ports. The vijayanagara empire maintained relations with Java, Malaya, Burma, China, Arabia, Persia and Portugal. The Portuguese marchants were enriched by their trade with the empire. The exports from the Vijayanagara empire were cloth, rice, iron, sugar and spices. The imports were horses, elephants, pears, silk.

The splendour and grandeur of the city was attested by a number of contemporary foreign travelers.

Abdul Razzak, who visited the city in 1443, observed the city of Vijayanagara is such that eye has not seen nor ever heard of any place resembling it upon the whole earth. In 1522,



peas found the city as extensive as Rome with more than 1,00,000 houses. He observed this is the best provided city in the world.

HOYASALA EMPIRE

Hoyasala empire was a prominent South Indian Kannadiga empire that ruled most of the modern day state of Karnataka between 10th and the 14th centuries. The capital of the Hoyasala was initially located at Belur but was later moved to Halebidu.

Economy of Hoyasala empire was particularly based on agriculture through business within India as well as foreign trade flourished to some extent, taxes were levied on professions, marriage, goods in transit on chariots, carriages, domesticated animals. Taxes on commodities like gold, precious stones, perfumes, sandal wood, ropes, yarn, sugarcane presses, palm leaves, and coconuts are mentioned in records. Fines for violating laws were also collected. The village assembly could levy tax for a specific purpose like construction of a water tanks, tax assessment was done by the village assembly.

Import of horses on the western seaboard was a flourishing business. Rich forest produce like teak was exported through Ports of present day Kerala. Inscriptions mention a flourishing textile industry. Trade with overseas kingdoms reached unprecedented levels.

KINGDOM OF MYSORE

The kingdom of Mysore was a kingdom in Southern India, traditionally believed to have been founded in 1399 in the vicinity of the modern city of Mysore. The kingdom which was ruled by the wodeyar family, initially served as a vassal state of the Vijayanagara empire. It is the only royal family in India that has ruled over a kingdom for more than 500 years. The wodeyar dynasty ruled the Southern Karnataka region until India independence in 1947, when the Kingdom was merged with the union of India.

The peak of Mysore's economic power was under Hyder Ali and Tippu Sultan. They embarked on an ambitious program of economic development, aiming increase the wealth and revenue of Mysore. Under the Mysore kingdom, Mysore overtook Bengal subah as India's dominant economic power, with highly productive agriculture and textile manufacturing.

The economy of the kingdom was based on agriculture Grains, pulses, vegetables and flowers were cultivated. The monopoly in the production of salt, iron, cardamom, betel nut, sandalwood, as well as the ownership of land was considered a prestige and people from all



trades aimed to own a Piece of land. The agrarian population consisted of land lords great and small who tilled payments for services were in land, usually grain. Landowners paid tax for cultivation, normally amounting up to one half of all produce that was harvested.

REFERENCES

1. Sastri.Nilakanta K.A. – A history of South India from pre-historic times to the fall of Vijayanagar.
2. Ishwari Prasad – History of Medieval India.
3. Chandrasekhara Sastri – Economic conditions under the Hoyasala.
4. Sathianathiar – Nayaks of Madura.
5. Wikipedia – <http://en.m.wikipedia.org> – Economy of Hoyasala Empire