

A HISTORICAL FOCUS ON THE ADMINISTRATION OF BARAMAHAL

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The Name Baramahal , Twelve Forts was constructed and prominently built by Jayadeva (Nayak of Vijayanagar Empire) for his sons, which came into the possession of the nawab of Cuddappah, who was associated with the naming of the region as Baramahal. The Baramahal comprised the taluks of Dharmapuri ,Harur the greater parts of Krishnagiri taluk and portions of Hosur taluk. After the third Mysore war, Tipu sultan was forced by the treaty of Srirangapatnam in March 1792 to cede these territories to the East India Company.

We came to know about the administration of the Baramahal through the Baramahal records. The Baramahal Records are significant in throwing ample light on the administration in the region. The Baramahal records are valuable records maintained by the British officials in the territory of Baramahal. The records were created for the administrative purpose. These records are in the form of official correspondence, copies of personal letters, and court proceedings of the company. These records are divided into 22 sections and these sections provide the information about social, economic and administrative aspects in general.

The Baramahal Records throw light on the sources of income obtained by the British. The British were more interested in greater amount of revenue from the people. For this purpose, in land revenue administration, Col. Read introduced the Ryotwari system. Apart from the land revenue administration , commercial interest, plantation, industries, customs duties, navigation etc. provided them with increasing sources of revenue. The British started the Sugar and Indigo plantation was also encouraged for transport of goods navigation on Cauveri river.

The company reduced the road customs and also systemized the taxation on various articles. Through these sources, the income of the revenue of the company was increased. The Baramahal Records contributed much more information regarding the maintenance of law and order of the company. Instead of Poligars, the Revenue officers were held responsible post for the safety of private property. The services of the Thallani were made use for suppressing the thieves. The military was also utilised and guarding the roads in order to safeguard the people to move from one village to another.

In Baramahal region, the whole district was divided into a number of superintendencies, which were in charge of Daroghas (superintendents). Next to the superintendents, thanas were placed under the supervision of Thandas. The last cadre was that of peons, who later came to be known as Police constables.

In Salem , Tirupartur and Krishnagiri the kotwals (Gaurds in the Forts) look after the police duties with the half of the peons. In 1794 , a special police force of peons and head peons was raised in each taluk. The

company employed the Brahmins, for motive of collecting secret information for the Intelligence Department. Thus the administration of the police and maintenance of law and order in an almost systematic manner by the Company in the Baramahal region.

The system of judicial administration was also prevalent in the region. The British continued the traditional village Panchayat system, which was already prevailed in the region. Revenue officers were given judicial powers. The collector appointed native people to deal with the judicial problems of the villages. Provincial Adalat were held two days or more than two days in a town or a place the judges were generally collectors. They were authorized to deal with civil cases. Sadr-Adalat an appellate court, was established in Madras-Sastris and Maulvis were consulted in cases dealing with Hindus and Muslims respectively. All the decisions of the Panchayat Court, provincial Adalat and Sadr Adalat were translated and kept for future references.

The British never interfered in the social customs, traditions, superstitions and culture of the people. The British, collected about the origin and practice of all the customs and traditions of the people of the region and published them under 'The Inhabitants'. The company ordered the collectors to make themselves familiar with the social conditions, languages, customs etc. of the inhabitants of the district in order to have a better understanding of the people.

The economic standard of the people also developed due to the commercialization of crops and the development of trade and industry. The softline cloths weaved by the Indians was admired everywhere. Weavers were given loans by the company specially, when the Indian clothes were in demand in England. Gold and silk threads, manufactured in the Baramahal region were supplied to the other parts of South India.

Thus the administration of the Baramahal region by the company was brought out the company's revenue in increased order, which showed the systematic taxation, custom houses and road customs in proper way. The company was satisfied with the administration of the police and maintenance of law and order in an almost systematic manner in the Baramahal region. The Company followed the traditional judicial system and as well as the British judicial system in the region. The inhabitants were allowed to follow their traditional customs and culture no major social change was brought out by the company under the company's rule. The economic condition of the people of the region improved to some extent, by the traditional maintenance of artisans, commercialization and development of trade and industry. On the whole, the administration of the region by the company restored peace and safety to the inhabitants and the ryots. Totally the British administration proves its fullest extent in Baramahal region is not formidable one.

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