

Growth of Cotton Crop in Telangana (1911 – 1948) – A Study

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DOI: 10.37648/ijps.v18i01.017

¹Received: 04 October 2024; Accepted: 21 November 2024; Published: 04 December 2024

1. Introduction

Hyderabad State has been a predominantly agrarian society. The majority of people in Hyderabad State were farmers and they acquired their income mainly through the agricultural produce. During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the agrarian economy of Hyderabad State, particularly in the Telangana region, began to undergo significant changes. These changes were influenced both by internal efforts of the Nizam's administration and by external factors such as global trade. Under the leadership of Sir Salar Jung, the Hyderabad state attempted to reform its agricultural and revenue systems. Recognizing the importance of land revenue as main source of income, Salar Jung introduced so many administrative reforms. Further, he promoted the use of modern farming techniques. Despite these reforms, the land continued to be controlled by jagirdars and other intermediaries, while actual cultivators had little security or ownership. This feudal structure remained a major obstacle to real agricultural development. To boost productivity, the state established the department of Agriculture in 1913 and created experimental farms in various districts. These farms conducted research on crops like cotton, paddy, and oilseeds, and promoted improved seeds and tools. However, these initiatives mostly benefited landlords rather than poor peasants.

Meanwhile, the global demand for raw materials, especially cotton, led to the rise of commercial agriculture. Cotton became a major crop in regions like Marathwada and parts of Telangana, supported by new roads, railways, and processing factories. Although the state invested in cotton promotion, small farmers struggled due to fluctuations of the market prices and lack of access to credit. In summary, while Hyderabad State made efforts to modernize agriculture and encourage cash crops, deep-rooted land inequalities and feudal practices limited the success of these efforts. This paper aims to examine how state policies, commercial influences, and social structures shaped agrarian development in Telangana and why these changes did not lead to lasting improvements for the rural poor.

Sir Salarjung Jung attempted to rationalize agrarian system to the growing needs of the state. As land revenue was the main source of income for the state, within the tenurial system as evolved during the Salar Jung period, agricultural development had to be given impetus and state had to play an active role in propagating the modern methods of cultivation apart from the agricultural extension work. The productive forces in the agricultural sector were sought to be unleashed through the public works programmes, agricultural research and extension work and partly financing agriculture through Co-operatives aided by the state. All these measures were intended to reinforce the developmental activities in agriculture, where agrarian relations based on jagirs and khalsa in the earlier period acted as fetters. One may tend to draw a parallel between the role of the state in Japan and the role of the state in Hyderabad. G.C. Allen observed that in Japan the state had actively participated in ushering agrarian reforms and the feudal state had been transformed into a capitalist state¹. Such a transformation had been lacking here in Hyderabad state, particularly in Telangana.

¹ How to cite the article: Shanthi P (December 2024); Growth of Cotton Crop in Telangana (1911 – 1948) – A Study; *International Journal of Professional Studies*; Jul-Dec 2024, Vol 18, 211-215; DOI: <http://doi.org/10.37648/ijps.v18i01.017>

In the Hyderabad state many agrarian reforms were introduced and conferred certain rights on pattedars, shikmis and asami-shikmis but land did not pass into the hands of actual tillers. Large estates either under the control of deshmukhs, or deshpandes or under the control of Jagirdars, were not dismembered to satisfy the land-hunger of the poor peasants. The jagirdari system was still in vogue where a large number of intermediaries were functioning in between the actual cultivator and the jagirdar or the state. Such a system of land relations inhibited the growth of the agricultural production.

But there could be certain external factors which can lead to an increase in agricultural production i.e., oil seeds, cotton, and such a factor was found to be the export trade, that had been growing during this period between Hyderabad State and other areas in the world. This had been a significant factor that helped the introduction of cash crops in the Hyderabad State. It has to be noted here that this growth of commercial agriculture in Telangana was only an expedient factor for competing in other markets, but it did not alter the basic relations of production. This process of commercialization of agriculture could have led to the emergence of capitalist relations in agriculture if land was not concentrated in the feudal had been more exploitative than in the British India.

2. Agriculture and Commercial Crops

An important aspect of agrarian development during the British Government in India was introducing high yielding and cash crops in many regions of the country. Along similar lines, to some extent, the Nizam's government policies also favored the cultivation of cash crops. With the advancement of the Industrial Revolution, British industries required an increasing supply of raw materials such as cotton and oilseeds, as well as an expanding market for their manufactured goods, many of which were exported abroad. The development of industry and extension of commercial agriculture preceded together and were inseparably connected and created a market for each other. In this process colonial countries had become suppliers of raw material to the industries of developing countries and at the same time colonial countries had become markets for industrial countries for the sale of their industrial produce.

Prior to 1857, there were neither industries nor cash crops in Hyderabad state. There was self-sufficient village economy: food grains like rice, jowar, maize, wheat, barley etc., were only produced as food crops to meet the hunger of the people of all kinds as well as revenue for the state. Apart from food crops, the traditional non-food crops like cotton, castor, sesamum, tobacco and chillies were produced. Thus, the village economy was a self-sufficient economy trying to exchange some of its products occasionally through barter in weekly sandies and monetisation of the economy was at a low degree, The needs of the economy at that time being meagre, the institutional structure did not undergo any major transformation for rapid agricultural development. The backwardness of Indian agriculture was due to the economic basis of the institutional structure viz the retrograde system of land relations in India under which the state had become the super landlord leaving the landlords and tenants without any incentives or resources for agricultural development².

In due course indigenous crops had to be replaced by commercial crops due to the introduction of a market economy. Crops like cotton produced for commercial use were initially introduced in Marathwada tract, and from there it was adopted in other parts of Telangana and Karnataka by the end of the second half of the nineteenth century³.

The Agriculture Department was established in 1322 F. (1913). It was originally placed under the Department of Revenue but later transferred to the Department of Industries and Commerce⁴. The Department of Agriculture was to check the displacement of the indigenous long staple crops by the imported short staple crops (food and non-food crops) suitable to local soils available in the State⁵.

The Agriculture Department had established its farms at Parbhani, Sangareddy, Kamareddy, Alair and Mahaboobnagar and Uppal prior to 1336 F. (1927). During the year 1336 F. the new central farm for the Telangana tract was established at Himayat Sagar in the vicinity of Hyderabad. The object of this farm was to grow economic crops that are suited to the Telangana soil using different kinds of manures and improved types of implements⁶. Thus, the total experimental farms in the dominion at the end of 1336 F. were seven where experiments on cotton, sugarcane, oilseeds and paddy with their respective rotational crops were conducted. Reclamation of Alkaline

lands was continued at Alair and sericulture experiments were made at Mahbubnagar and Alair. The cultivation of tobacco and other crops was also under investigation.

The work of the Department of Agriculture may be classified according to its nature as (a) Research, (b) Experiment, and (c) Demonstration. This had been carried by all the farms. The Himayat Sagar Farm at Hyderabad was established to study the agricultural problems of Telangana track and to serve as a guiding centre to other farms in that division⁷. The research work of the Department included investigations of a purely technical nature whereas an attempt was made to accommodate scientific theories into agricultural practice. Further, it was reported that the main object of maintaining the Sangareddy farm was to show the cultivator how to make the best use of chalka soils in the Telangana districts and thus to supplement the work of main farm⁸. Research, experiment and demonstration are the main farm. The real aim of the agriculture department is to improve the agriculture of the country so that the country may be able to produce and earn more from it. Research, Experiment and demonstration are means to that end. Various experiments were carried out by the Department for the extension of agriculture.

An enquiry into the results of extension of agriculture shows the importance of foreign trade and it becomes evident that to meet the demand of growing industries, these crops were encouraged in the Hyderabad state. Lancashire had been yearning for cotton, since every ounce of its cotton had to be imported. In their memorial of 1838, the Manchester chamber of Commerce urged the construction of roads and even recommended "modification of Land Tax" so that cotton can be supplied. The cotton commission even proposed the opening of Railways towards Deccan. In the Railway Minutes of 1853, Dalhousie pointed out the commercial advantages of Railways which would be the fitting means of conveyance for cotton from distant plains to the several parts adopted for its shipment⁹.

The need of cotton to the industries of Europe was met mostly from America and India. At the same time the acreage under cotton increased considerably towards the close of the nineteenth century. In 1874 a spinning and weaving company was established in Hyderabad city. Two textile mills were opened in 1888 at Gulbarga and Aurangabad respectively. Cotton ginning and pressing began to be established during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. But in 1898 such factories were 12. By the end of the first decade of the rule of last Nizam i.e., 1922 a cotton mill was established at Nanded, namely Osman Shahi Mill¹⁰. Thus, the cotton crop became an important crop not only for foreign industries but also for the indigenous industries. It was not only cotton but other commercial crops like sugarcane, groundnut and castor also become important. The acreage and output of all those crops along with another important staple food-crops like rice will be attempted hereunder.

Cotton:

The short staple cotton, yielding a heavier out-turn per acre than the indigenous long staple, was first introduced in various places with the idea of mixing the short and long staples together and passing off the mixture as long staple since the moisture mixture is practically indistinguishable from the long staple. The statistical department for this purpose classified Hyderabad cotton under "Omoras" which included "Bharat", the short staple cotton of "Khadesh". The result of all this naturally reduced the price of Cotton¹¹.

From the out-set, the Department endeavored it's best to revive the cultivation of Gaorani to as large an extent as before the advent of the short staple Bharat. Farms were opened for the cultivation of the pure long staple and for the provision of seed¹².

At first, the ryots refused to use the seed from the farms until the Department agreed to buy their Kapas [Cotton] grown from the seed distributed by the farms to hand over the profits to the ryots¹³. (1924) the Government placed Rs. 30,000 at the disposal of the Director of Agriculture with a view to increase the cotton cultivation. Apart from this, efforts were made to induce the mill owners in Bombay to buy kapas from the state. The Department of Agriculture had thousands and lakhs of Rupees at its disposal to increase the acreage and yield under cotton cultivation¹⁴. this time an agriculturists' association was formed amongst landlords in the Hyderabad State¹⁵.

It seems that the agreement between the ryots and the Department of Agriculture regarding supplying seeds, advancing loans towards other facilities for cultivation and at the same time buying produce or making

concessions for the sale of produce was the basis of cotton cultivation. This system helped the Government to realize more revenue in the form of duty and land revenue to the level of their expectations.

Through the exertion of the Agricultural Department, chiefly by the establishment of farms and the distribution of good seed, considerable improvement had been effected in the quality of the cotton, Gaorani and 'Bharat' varieties were grown side by side on a soil more suited to cotton cultivation.

Cotton Cultivation in the Telangana (1340 – 1354 F.)

Sl.No	Year	Number of Acres	Output (In tonnes)
1	1340 F.	5,68,487	73,794
2	1344 F.	4,21,412	58,536
3	1348 F.	3,85,524	51,230
4	1354 F.	2,63,159	27,854

Sources: Statistical Year Books for the year 1331 to 1354 F

The above table reveals that in Telangana, the acreage under cotton cultivation constantly had gone down right from 1340-1354 F. (1931-1945) and not only in acreage but even in output. The cotton production steadily declined from 73,794 tonnes in 1340 F. to 27,854 tonnes in 1354 F. due to the fluctuations in price in the wake of the depression and the world war. If we compare the Telangana districts with others regarding the acreage under the cotton cultivation and out-turn, Adilabad stood in the first place and Karimnagar next. (See table).

Cotton yields in Selected Districts of Telangana (1340 – 1354 F.)

Sl No	Year	Adilabad		Karimnagar		Telangana	
		Acreage	Yields (in tonnes)	Acreage	Yields (in tonnes)	Acreage	Yields (in tonnes)
1	1340 F.	3,57,472	53,621	1,24,015	12,221		73,794
2	1344 F.	2,72,936	43,837	67,904	5,198	4,21,412	58,536
3	1348 F.	2,78,389	40,295	46,488	4,561	3,85,524	51,230
4	1354 F.	1,92,073	21,922	37,358	2,520	2,63,159	27,854

Sources: Statistical Year Books for the year 1331 to 1354 F

In view of the above table, large quantities of cotton produced in the State, there was a vast source of raw material for the development of textile industries. In fact, the number of establishments connected with textiles was the largest in the state. This was composed of cotton ginning and pressing factories and weaving mills (cotton ginning 42, pressing 3, ginning and pressing 41, spinning and weaving 3, silk handloom 10)¹⁶. Most of the cotton ginning and pressing factories are located in Marathwada, only few being established in Telangana. This was due to the fact that cotton was grown extensively in Marathwada region only. On the other hand, cotton and silk hand-loom factories were found mostly in Telangana, especially in the districts of Mahbubnagar and Warangal. Of the spinning and weaving mills, Hyderabad city and the towns of Aurangabad and Gulbarga had one each.

Thus, cotton cultivation did not extend to all the areas in Telangana and the decline in the output also did not favour the extension of area under cultivation of this crop despite growing demand for cotton during this period. The attention of the agricultural department was not only confined to cotton. Various experiments were carried in research centers established in Telangana as well as in Marathwada to improve the technology, produce of various crops through high yielding seeds, discovery of new crops, suitable to the local soils.

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