

CHAPTER-VII

CONCLUSION

Thus, from the foregoing analysis in six chapters strengthens our position that there is enough case for making a departure from the already existing published works both books and journals. According to the conventional method, the growth of the textile industry in Madras has been viewed merely as a process which does not have links with the character of the state. In a colonial situation growth or the decay of the industries can not be discussed in isolation of the role of the state. Because, in the 19th century and early 20th century India, the British colonialism had myriad facets. The whole gamut of the social, economic, political and cultural life in a colonised country is influenced by the colonial authority. And hence, any approach which ignores an understanding of this problem becomes weaker in its analysis of the reality. This could be said in the case of certain works on the development of textile industry and the working class movement for the Presidency as a whole.

Coimbatore was traditionally a cotton-cultivating area, which supplied raw material for the hand loom-weavers of Coimbatore. When Coimbatore encountered colonisation under the English East India Company, these traditional weavers were the first casualty. The Company, which was eager to export finished cotton-stuffs from India, converted the Coimbatore weavers into semi-slavery. First they were

advanced loans, then they were compelled to supply cotton goods only to the Company warehouses for export. To prevent any kind of contraband trade and to keep the prices under control, the Company even went to the extent of taxing those who installed more than two looms. The early Company records on the Presidency and on Coimbatore mention them substantially.

However, with the phenomenal growth of Manchester and Lancashire cotton-mills during the industrial revolution, the colonial priorities under-went a fundamental change. New forces had emerged in England too. While the private traders and the textile-lobby became a deciding force in England, Company became increasingly an exporter of raw materials from India. That is why during the 19th century the British colonial regime was increasingly interested in converting India into an agrarian appendage of Great Britain. In spite of the Laissez-Faire doctrine, the colonial state was interested in creating conditions conducive for the growth of commercial crops meant for export. The introduction of the ryotwari system and the provision for the payment of rent in cash, was the first objective condition for a spurt in cash crop-cultivation.

Our study shows that the colonial state had directly intervened through its agents to promote commercial cultivation in the Coimbatore district. This included attempts to introduce new varieties of cotton seeds.

Starting of experimental farms clearly shows that the colonial state, though against industrialization always encouraged commercial cultivation in order to ensure a steady supply of raw-materials.

In fact, the large-scale experimentation of both indigenous and foreign varieties of cotton in Coimbatore by the colonial government gave encouragement to the ryots to bring more and more lands under cotton cultivation. Apart from this, the formation of the regulated markets in the cotton-growing centres of the district, helped the mill-owners to procure cotton conveniently from the nearby markets of the mills.

The chapter on the 'Making of the Capitalists' gives a vivid idea about capital and entrepreneurship in a wider perspective. The new entrepreneurship classes emerged from the traditional business communities of Coimbatore who not only had extensive trading net works and money-lending activities, but they also held vast tracts of agricultural lands. The picture that emerges from our study of Coimbatore is slightly different from that of Bombay. In Coimbatore, the Indian capital was not basically shy or slow. Potential investors from certain trading communities who also had incidentally vast cultivated lands and money-lending activities, courageously entered the cotton sector for new investment. Thus, it was basically the trading agricultural capital which got transformed into an industrial capital.

The Coimbatore mills were primarily spinning mills, though there were some weaving mills too. As far as the spinning mills were concerned, they had to sell their entire produce. The yarn which was spun in the mills mostly sold in the local market of the erstwhile Madras Presidency and partly-exported-to-Ahmedabad, Bengal, Bombay, Burma and China. Since the spinning mills of Coimbatore depended mainly upon the handloom weavers of Madras Presidency to dispose their yarn, they were compelled to produce and supply yarn according to the needs of the hand loom weavers.

The yarn market of the cotton mills of Coimbatore was brought under the direct control of the colonial government of Madras from the year 1941 and later by the Government of India. But, the mills were left for their own choice to market their products before the Second World War. As a whole, except in the year 1939, the yarn market was much favourable to the mill-owners of Coimbatore to earn profit. Indeed, the profit earning capacity of the mills made Coimbatore one of the important textile centres of India. Though Coimbatore did not produce finished products for international market for a great extent, it could survive by supplying yarn in the Asian markets and also by relying on the vast internal market.

The living conditions, wage structure, leisure, working hours etc., in the early cotton mills were extremely unsatisfactory. Despite the fact that early workers of the

Coimbatore Mills had to work under inhuman conditions, they did not develop a working class consciousness in the beginning. This was mainly because of the fact that these workers were drawn mainly from the nearby villages where the bonds of caste, customs and tradition still loomed large. Since, the major mill-owners themselves were land-lords, the workers, who were recruited from the subservient loyal rural population had some kind of affinity towards them. Although the labour movement made progress from 1930s, it was faction-ridden due to ideological as well as personality differences among its leaders.

When we view the triangular relationship between the colonial state, mill-owners and the mill-hands, new vistas are opened to our understanding of the problem. A general picture of a strong class conscious working class emerges from our study. The workers were mobilized at two levels. One under the influence of the Nationalist ideology of the Congress and the other under the rising communist ideology. The influence of these two forces and strands of ideology made the Coimbatore worker not only class-conscious but also politically active.

Our study shows that the mill-owners were not in a mood to accede to the demands of the workers, though the working class had become really active and militant. The Congress-led anti-colonial struggle had some impact on the working class movement too. The working class mainly fought for

their economic demands along with a few political demands. The mill owners, on the other hand, tried on many occasions to have a split within the movement.

Thus, in the Madras Presidency and in the Coimbatore District, the British Capitalists themselves made initial ventures. Following their example, several individual entrepreneurs emerged from among the wealthy Naidus, Chettiars and Gounders of the Coimbatore region. Three factors have helped these mills to sustain themselves in Coimbatore. Firstly, the attitude of the Madras Government towards the industrialisation in general was less negative compared to that of the Calcutta administration or that of the Home Government. Secondly, the mobility of the local capital was comparatively easier in Coimbatore than in other places. Thirdly, the Coimbatore Mills generally specialised in yarn production of lower counts, which did not compete with Manchester or Lancashire. On the other hand their production itself was complementary to the British industry and not competitive.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Kuppuswamy Naidu, G.

G. Kuppuswamy Naidu was born on 31 December 1884 at Uppilipalayam in Coimbatore. After his early education in a Verandah school at Uppilipalayam and a regular Board School, Kuppuswamy Naidu joined in the St. Antony's School at Coimbatore in 1894. He left the school at the age of fourteen and joined with his father to look after the family farms. Later, he was very much involved in the business and industrial activities.

In the midst of all his business activities, in 1921 Kuppuswamy Naidu launched a campaign towards the closure of toddy shops. In 1926 he became the member of the Municipal Council, Coimbatore. Further, during the Civil Disobedience Movement, he organized relief measures for the families of the Congress workers who were jailed. Kuppuswamy Naidu was also not free from philanthropic activities. He spent a huge sum for the Srinivasaperumal temple at Pappanaickenpalayam. He also set apart Rs. 1,50,000 and endowed a site of sixteen acres valued at Rs. 1,50,000 for the construction of a hospital for women in Coimbatore and three years after his death a committee was formed to fulfil his wishes in this matter. Nevertheless he lost his breathe on 17 December 1942.

Ramalingam Chettiar, T.A.

Born on 15 May 1881 at Tirupur to Angappa Chettiar, who was a leading merchant and a banker of Tirupur and having landed property and a rice mill in Coimbatore, T.A. Ramalingam Chettiar studied at the Presidency Collage, Madras and the Madras Law Collage, Madras, and started practice as a lawyer in 1905. He "vas the secretary of the Tamilian Archaeological Society, the president of the Coimbatore District Agricultural Association, Vice-president of the Coimbatore District Board, the Chairman of the Coimbatore Municipal Council from 1918-19 and the president of the Coimbatore District Board from 1920-1923. He was first elected to the Madras Legislative Council in 1921 and continued to be a member of the Council till 1939 when he was elected to the Central Legislative Assembly. In 1946, he became a member of the Constituent Assembly and in 1952 he was elected unopposed to the first Loka Sabha. Though he was in the Non-Brahmin Movement for some time, soon he changed over to Congress. But, he was essentially a moderate. In addition to these, he was the president of the Co-operative Institute, the Tirupur Loan and Sale Society, the Madras State Central Land Mortgage Bank, District Co-operative Central Bank, the Board of Director of the Coimbatore Cotton Mills Limited, the Radhakrishna Mills Limited and Coimbatore Spinning and weaving. Company Limited and the Vice-President of the Indian Co-operative Union. He had been also elected the president of the Provincial Co-operative Central Urban

Bank, Madras. However, in the midst of all his Socio-economic and political activities he died on 12 February 1952.

Ratnasabapathy Mudaliar C.S.

Born on 9 March 1886 in a wealthy business family of Coimbatore, C.S. Ratnasabapathy Mudaliar got his education at Coimbatore. He became the member of the Coimbatore Municipal Council in 1906. With Swadeshi idea, he collected funds for the Swadeshi Steam Navigation Company Limited which was started by V.O. Chidambaram Pillai. In 1921, he became the Chairman of the Coimbatore Municipality. He was also the member of the Madras Legislative Council from 1926 to 1936. His interest in the textile industry made him to become the president of the Southern India Mill Owners' Association, Coimbatore for fourteen years. Moreover, he acted as the President of the Madras Handloom Weavers' Co-operative Society and President of the Coimbatore Co-operative Milk Supply Co-operation Union from 1937 to 1956. He was also the Managing Agent of the Saroja Mills and the Vysia Mills, Coimbatore.

Robert Stanes

Born in London on 13 May 1841 to James Stanes, Robert Stanes left the school at the age of sixteen. Then he served for one year in the firm of Messrs. Toulmin, Livingston and Company, the ship brokers of London. In December 1858 he arrived at Madras to assist his brothers William and Thomas who were having coffee estates on the Nilgiri hills. There he assisted his brothers for a few years. Later he started industrial establishments.

In the midst of all his business activities, he also involved in the philanthropic works by starting a school at Coimbatore in 1862 with four children and two teachers. In the same year he was appointed as the first Chairman of Coimbatore Municipal Council. On 7 July 1870 he got married Harriet Huntington Harris. In 1914, he was awarded the 'Kaiser-I-Hind' gold medal, and in 1920 he was knighted. He died on 6 September 1936.

Sencottaiah, V.S.

Born in a very poor family at Vayyampalayam near Tirupur, V.S. Sencottaiah studied upto high school level, took his career as a handloom weaver and then became a cotton trader. After his living in Chennimalai near Erode for some time, he came and settled in Coimbatore as a cotton merchant. The contact which he got from the early textile pioneers of Coimbatore influenced him to establish a cotton mill in

Coimbatore. In his early life he was inspired by a book of the English Philosopher James Allen entitled, "As a Man Thinketh". This book was translated to Tamil by V.O. Chidambaram Pillai during his incarceration in Coimbatore jail. Interested in social reform, he was a vigorous prohibition worker and preached against animal-sacrifices in Hindu temples.

Further, he served as an Honorary Magistrate in Coimbatore, elected member of the Coimbatore Municipality for three terms, member of the Indian Central Cotton Committee and Honorary jail visitor. He also distributed a good portion of profits which he acquired from his business activities to philanthropic measures. He endowed Child Welfare Centre at Coimbatore, a Municipal Dispensary at Coimbatore and the Perundurairi T.B. Sanatorium in Coimbatore. Again, he endowed funds for a hospital, a school, a choultry in the village of Chennimalai in Erode taluk and was an active member of the Coimbatore District War Committee.

Shanmukham Chetty, R.K.

Born on 17 October 1892 in a respected wealthy business community of Coimbatore, Shanmukham Chetty did his school education in Coimbatore. He studied B.A. (Economics) at Madras Christian College, Madras. He also studied Law at Madras Law College, Madras. In 1917 he became the Coimbatore Municipal Councillor and was elected as its Vice-Chairman.

In 1920, Shanmukham Chetty became the member of the Madras Legislative Council at the age of twenty-eight from Nilgiri constituency. In 1923, he became the member of the Central Legislative Assembly from the constituency of Coimbatore, Salem and North Arcot and he continued till 1934. In 1924, he went to England with Dr. Annie Besant to attend the National Convention. In 1926 he went to Australia as India's representative in the British Parliamentary delegation. Again, for three consecutive years from 1927 to 1930 he went to Geneva as Adviser to the Employers' delegate from India.

In 1931, Shanmukham Chetty became the Deputy President of the Central Legislative Assembly and on 14 March 1933 he became its President. In July 1932 he went to Ottawa in Canada as a member of the delegation for the Imperial Economic Conference to consider a tariff agreement between India and the United Kingdom. In 1933, he was bestowed as 'Knight Commander' of the Indian Empire by George V, the King of England for his meritorious contributions to the Central Legislative Assembly. On 7 April 1935 he was appointed as the Dewan of Cochin and he continued it till 4 June 1941.

As soon as Shanmukham Chetty left Cochin in 1941, he was appointed by the Government of India as the Head of Indian Purchasing Mission to undertake for the Government of India the procurement of war supplies from America, to arrange for shipping and exporting facilities from America and to obtain priority for orders placed by the Government of India. In

1944, he attended the World Monetary Conference at Bretton Woods in U.S.A., which was convened by President Roosevelt in order to discuss the financial structure of the post war world. In November 1945 he was appointed as the president of the Indian Tariff Board and he held this post till August 1947. During his term of office in the Tariff Board he reviewed the position of several industries in the country and he recommended protection wherever it was in the interests of the country's industrial progress. In August 1947 he relinquished the knighthood and became the first Finance Minister of free India. However, he resigned his ministership in August 1948, became the Vice-Chancellor of Annamalai University in 1951 and was awarded Doctorate in 1952 by the same university for his service to the public. Amidst of all his economic and political activities he died in 1953.

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