

## COMMERCIALISATION OF AGRICULTURE AND ITS IMPACT IN SALEM DISTRICT, c.1850-1950

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**Dr. V. PALANICHAMY**

*Assistant Professor, P.G. & Research Department of History  
Arignar Anna Government Arts College, Musiri, Tamil Nadu, India*

**P. SELLADURAI**

*Assistant Professor, Department of History  
Government Arts College, Ariyalur, Tamil Nadu, India*

### **Abstract**

*The commercialization of India agriculture was initiated by the British through their direct and indirect policies and political activities in India. It has an important feature of the emergence and consolidation of capitalism. The commercialization of agricultural products leads new trends in Indian economy as well as the international market with other countries. David Ludden has pointed out that the nineteenth-century industrialization made much of the world Europe's agricultural hinterland. Industry escalated European demand for peasant crops, among which cotton assumed overwhelming importance as a raw material for English cloth manufacture. At the same time, industrial technologies enabled Europeans to expand and tighten their political power in strategic corners of the world economy, thus to secure markets and improve their terms of trade. Peasants and merchants of South India participated enthusiastically in the worldwide expansion in agricultural commodity production that accompanied European industrialization.<sup>1</sup>*

**Keywords:** *Commercialization, agricultural products, international market, Indian economy, political power, world economy*

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Commercialization of agriculture was major change brought by the Colonial Rulers. New crops and other industry based products were being produced for the market and not only for local consumption. It is true that some kind of commercialization of agriculture was already prevalent even in the pre-British days, particularly after the Mughals had introduced the system of cash-payment for land revenue. But the British brought about a major change both in quantitative as well as qualitative terms. In other words, the new system differed from the old one in that now the Company-Government started forcing South Indian peasants to produce industrial based exportable goods. Hence, in Salem district, the big land holding communities and small peasants were involved cultivating commercial crops like cotton, sugarcane, groundnut, indigo and tobacco etc. Cotton and cotton yarn was more demand to the British textile industry in England during the American Civil War (1861-1865), therefore, it witnessed to export cotton from India. In addition, the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 made bulk shipment of food grains and commercial crops were sent to European Markets by sea route quickly.<sup>2</sup> Historians are described about agricultural commercialization in India.<sup>3</sup> The most important commercial crop (cash-crop) was cotton, which had been grown in Salem region for a long time and had spawned a considerable industry of local hand-spinning and handloom-weaving.

### **Cotton Cultivation**

Cotton plant is indigenous to Peninsular India, which is long-rooted thrives particularly on "black soil" areas. Cotton was cultivated to a certain extent on red and alluvial soils too. There were varieties of cotton usually grown in this region. They were: 1) nadam-parutti, 2) uppam parutti (or ukkam-parutti), 3) Sem-patutti and 4) adukku-parutti (or sada-parutti). Nadam was grown in red loams, and was sown after the tamil month of Chittrai (April-May). Nadam plants usually bear for three years, and they bear twice a year. Uppam and sem-parutti favour black soils and *adukku-parutti* cultivate like nadam preferred in red soil. Ukkam or uppam was a one

year crop. It is from *adukku-patutti* and *sem-parutti* that the sacred thread was spun. For cotton cultivation, the farmers were given much importance in the agricultural economy of Salem district.<sup>4</sup> The ryot used formerly to gin and spin the produce and hand the yarn over to the village Pariahs to woven into cloths.<sup>5</sup>

In the year 1819, Heath and Brown, the Board of Trade came out with a proposal for opening four hundred acres experimental farms while the experimental was conducted and to extent cotton Cultivation throughout Madras Presidency. The Collector of Salem<sup>6</sup> then reported that cotton was cultivated to a very limited extent in Salem district and that too as a crop mixed with grains. The “Minerva” landed the cargo of five cases of American Sea Island cotton seeds at Madras in 1831.<sup>7</sup> The Board of Revenue distributed American seeds of Upland Georgian Casks and Sea Island to the district Collectors of Tirunelveli, Coimbatore, Salem and South Arcot and make a special report regarding cotton cultivation.<sup>8</sup> The Collector of Salem received American cotton seeds like one-fourth Upland Georgian casks and 50 lb of Sea Island and distributed to the ryots. In 1833, the report was received by the Board of Revenue from the Collector of Salem which stated that the soil and climate was not suitable to cotton cultivation in this region. He added that the prospects of extending cotton in this district were not bright.

J. Talboys Wheller has given the extent of cotton cultivation of the Madras Presidency in district wise from 1853-54 to 1860-1861. According to him, in 1853, land under cultivation cotton in Salem district was 13,908 acres (including zamindary and inam lands) and it was increased to 16,054 acres in 1857.<sup>9</sup> The reason is the government had been encouraged the ryot to cultivate cotton and other commercial crops and assessed tax. After 1858, it was slightly decreased due to scarcity of rain. In the year 1864-65, the extent of land under this crop was increased about 20,941 acres. Further it was decreased to 9,311 acres in 1870. In the year 1871-72, there was no cultivation about cotton and indigo while sugarcane cultivation was occupied in small areas and the rest of the areas mostly affected by famine. In 1873, cotton cultivation was increased from 8, 559 to 22,879 acres because the government gave a tax exemption to the ryots. Moreover, the colonial government had provided *takkavi* loans to cultivators for purchasing seeds, cattle, manure etc. In 1877, cotton cultivation was decreased to 8,912 acres due to famine not only in this district but affected the whole districts of Madras Presidency. (See below the table).

**Area under Cotton Cultivation in Salem District from 1853-1932-33**

Year	Acres	Year	Acres	Year	Acres
1853-54	13,908	1871-72	F*	1886-87	NA**
1854-55	13,799	1872-73	8,559	1887-88	20,711
1855-56	10,491	1873-74	22,879	1888-89	19,749
1856-57	11,900	1874-75	20,999	1909-10	30,954
1857-58	16,054	1875-76	12,630	1910-11	12,694
1858-59	13,212	1876-77	11,507	1926-27	49,731
1859-60	15,214	1877-78	8,912	1929-30	49,403
1860-61	15,707	1878-79	13,936	1931-32	48,262
1864-65	20,941	1879-80	10,207	1932-33	44,707
1865-66	16,135	1880-81	11,499	1942-43	25,722
1866-67	13,421	1881-82	17,571	1943-44	59,927
1867-68	15,830	1882-83	22,282	1944-45	32,000
1868-69	12,089	1883-84	20,277	1945-46	29,060
1869-70	14,601	1884-85	23,383	1946-47	25,600
1870-71	9,311	1885-86	19,625	----	----

Source: J.Talboys Wheeler, Hand-book to the Cotton Cultivation in the Madras Presidency, op.cit., also see R.Ratnam, Agricultural Development in Madras State prior to 1900, New Century Book House Pvt. Ltd, Madras, 1960, pp.270-171; Report on the Settlement of the Land Revenue of the Provinces under the Madras Presidency fasli 1283 (1873-74), Madras, Board of Revenue,1875, P.17;Report on the Administration of the Madras Presidency during the year 1870-71, Government Press, Madras, 1872, p.77, Para.161; Report on the Administration of the Madras Presidency,

during the year 1880-81, Government Press, Madras, 1881, p.101; H. Le Faune, Manual of Salem District, p.148., Season and Crops Reports in various year 1910-11, 1926-27, 1929-30, 1931-32, 1932-33; Indian Central Committee Report in the year, 1944, 1945, 1946, and 1948.

**Note:** The cultivation of cotton in Salem District from 1853-54 to 1860-61 prepared from the Annual *Jammabundy* Accounts received from the Collector of Salem-quoted by J. Talboys Wheeler, Hand-book to the Cotton Cultivation in the Madras Presidency, Virtue Brothers and Co., 1863, Appendix, I, pp.ii-iii. \* F - Famine year, \*\* NA - Not Available.

Cambodia cotton occupied about 36,930 acres in 1926 and it was increased to 40,105 acres in 1932, but *uppam*, *nadam* and *bourbon* varieties was cultivated less areas.<sup>10</sup> At the time of Second World War cotton was demand in European countries hence cotton cultivation was increased about 59,527 acres. Then, the cotton cultivation was further decreased due to unfavorable season. The prices of food grains were increased due to Second World War. Most of the merchants and agents were kept stock of food grains to sell their commodities in high price. After the Second World War the Colonial masters were transferred their administration control to Indians.

### Sugarcane Cultivation

Another important cash crop is sugarcane cultivation. At the close of the eighteen century, sugarcane was cultivated chiefly in Ganjam, Vizagapattinam, Masulipattinam, Salem, and limit extent in Chingleput district. In the year 1799 one Edward Campbell was allowed “to proceed to India for the purpose of establishing sugar works in such of the districts under the Madras Government as he may conceive most favourable for such an undertaking”.<sup>11</sup> The government asked to assist him. Great efforts were made by Campbell for the improvement of sugarcane cultivation in South Arcot, Dindigul, Coimbatore, Krishnagiri and Salem.<sup>12</sup> There was a improvement in the area under cane cultivation in the folling districts such as Ganjam, Vizagapattinam, Rajamundry, Cuddapah, North Arcot and Salem. One of Robert Wright was suggested that in the year 1835, to introduce new varieties of cane cultivation in Madras Province including Salem district, it was cultivated after 1840s in limited areas. The reason was that though cane cultivation was profitable, it was also very expensive, and therefore beyond the means of the great majority of the ryots. Sugarcane cultivation was grown under irrigated areas and its cultivation was undertaken only by well-to-do agriculturists.<sup>13</sup> In Salem district was a dry region, there was no perennial river for irrigating the field. The only river Ponnaiyar and its tributaries were received only less amount of water which irrigates only northern areas of Salem district. Therefore, sugarcane was cultivated only limited areas where water facilities are available. It required more capital, more water and more labour than the staple wet crop, rice. The table given below, drawn up from an account given by Mr. Fisher, a planter in Salem to Dr. Wight in 1835,<sup>14</sup> as follows:

### Expenses of Cultivating one acre of Sugarcane

(Statement furnished by Mr. G. Fisher, a planter, 1835)

	Rs.	A.	P.
For seed cane 600 pieces	5	0	0
“ Manuring	5	0	0
“ Ploughing	5	0	0
“ Hedging and weeding	5	0	0
“ watering	10	0	0
Government Assessment	12	8	0
Compressing the cane and making Jaggery or sugar	20	8	0
<b>Total charges</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>0</b>
Average produce Jaggery or sugar 300 lbs value	84	0	0
<b>Profit</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>0</b>

The cost of ploughing, manuring etc. was considerably higher, the total charges coming to Rs.62-8-0 which is much greater than the cost of rice cultivation. On the other hand the profits amounted to Rs.21-8-0 or more than 30% on the outlay. Further it took ten to fourteen months to be ready for cutting and the poorer ryots who lived from hand to mouth could not afford to wait so long. Besides, the plant exhausted the soil greatly and hence could not be grown on the same field oftener than once in five or

three years. Besides, there was a difficulty of transport and high cost of transit which, in the case of an article like sugar, enhanced the price considerably. The sugarcane of fairly good quality was cultivated in Salem, chiefly in Kellamangalam village.<sup>15</sup> The following table shows areas under sugarcane cultivation in Salem district (see below stable).

**Areas under sugarcane cultivation in various years (in acres)**

Year	Acres	Year	Acres	Year	Acres
1852-53	1,323	1875-76	341	1909-10	4,823
1865-66	1,480	1876-77	410	1910-11	2,300
1866-67	1,317	1877-78	1,000	1915-16	2,592
1867-68	1,543	1878-79	997	1926-27	5,392
1868-69	1,308	1879-80	NA	1929-30	3,280
1869-70	1,654	1880-81	2,726	1931-32	6,982
1870-71	2,143	1881-82	2,131	1932-33	7,697
1871-72	1,717	1883-84	1,759	1945-46	10,111
1872-73	1,535	1884-85	2,335	1959-60	16,591
1873-74	1,815	1885-86	2,017	----	----
1874-75	1,457	1886-87	NA	----	----

**Source:** Board of Revenue: Report on the Settlement of the Land Revenue of the Provinces under the Madras Presidency fasli 1282 (1872-73), , Madras, 1874, p.19, Report on the Settlements of the Land Revenue of the Provinces under the Madras Presidency for fasli 1277 (1867-68), Board of Revenue, Madras, 1869, p.437 and various years; H.Le Fanue, Madras District Gazetteer: Salem, pp.147-148, F.J. Richards, Salem District Gazetteer, p. 213, and also see R. Ratnam,

Agricultural development in Madras State Prior to 1900, New Century Book House Pvt. Ltd, Madras, 1960, p.309; Season and Crops Reports in Various year, 1910-11, 1926-27, 1930-31 and 1931-32.

**Note:** NA- Not Available.

The above table shows the acreage of sugarcane cultivation was 1,323 acres in the year 1852-53, and it was increased to 2,143 acres in 1870-71. In 1871, there was no sugarcane cultivation due to famine. Then the cultivation was increased to 1,457 acres in 1874. During the famine year 1876-78, sugarcane cultivation was decrease to 341 acres. Further it was increased to 10,111 acres in 1945-46 when there is a demand in European countries due to the Second World War, Where cane cultivation was not increased. Therefore sugar was exported from India.

**Groundnut Cultivation**

Groundnut is another important commercial crop (or cash crop) in South India. The groundnut, earth-nut, or pea-nut derives its name from the fact that the young pod forces its way beneath the surface of the earth, where it ripens. This crop was cultivated particularly in Anantapur, Cuddapah, North Arcot, South Arcot, Thanjavur, and Salem districts of Madras Province.<sup>16</sup> There is no knowledge recorded in the early history about the groundnut cultivation.<sup>17</sup> The record of the earlier part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century do not mention of groundnuts. However, it grown even during this period in some of the districts thought in a very little. The trade account compiled by the East India Company do not also mention of any export trade in this commodity. The major expansions came, however, with the growth of world demand after 1860 and the most important crops were cotton and groundnut.<sup>18</sup>

V.K. Badami has mentioned in his article "Groundnut-Original Habitat and its Distribution in the World", it may have come from Manila to South India (hence the name called Manila Kottai).<sup>19</sup> During the year 1850-51, it is chiefly cultivated in South Arcot district of Madras Presidency was 4,000 acres.<sup>20</sup> This was a small extent to meet local demands had become a very remunerative commercial crop. In 1852, the acreage of groundnut cultivation was 6,700 acres and in 1870s it was increased to 20,000 acres only South Arcot district only then it further increased to 1, 90,000 acres in 1889-90, and huge amount of groundnut were exported from the ports of Cuddalore, Pondicherry and Madras to the European markets.<sup>21</sup> The development of railways in this region has greatly reduced the cost of transport of goods by land therefore the cultivation of groundnut was increased. The exports of groundnuts from the Madras Presidency during 1875-76 amounted to just 6,994 cwts. Valued at Rs.29,774/-.<sup>22</sup> The demand in Europe grew with the development of food and cosmetic and cosmetic industries, mostly in France and Germany. Successive pressing of groundnut yielded raw materials for cooking oil, margarine, and soaps.<sup>23</sup> The French trade in groundnut was a large and increasing one, the extraction of the oil which is in considerable

demand for the manufacture cosmetic industries of soap, for consumption as food and for other purposes being conducted on a large scale at Marseilles. The following table shows the areas under groundnut cultivation in the Madras Presidency.

#### Groundnut Cultivation in the Madras Presidency from 1881-82 to 1930-31 (in acres)

Year	Acres	Year	Acres	Year	Acres
1881 - 82	71,163	1897 - 98	83,715	1914 - 15	1,866,000
1882 - 83	73,568	1898 - 99	116,200	1915 - 16	1,136,000
1883 - 84	98,536	1899 -1900	102,000	1916 - 17	1,793,000
1888 - 85	145,976	1900 - 01	229,997	1917 - 18	1,415,000
1885 - 86	161,607	1902 - 03	421,300	1918 - 19	1,001,000
1886 - 87	153,013	1903 - 04	384,400	1919 - 20	1,144,000
1887 - 88	141,507	1904 - 05	366,400	1920 - 21	1,600,000
1888 - 89	211,890	1905 - 06	393,100	1921 - 22	1,459,000,
1889 - 90	279,355	1906 - 07	511,000	1922 - 23	1,754,000
1890 - 91	258,313	1907 - 08	601,800	1923 - 24	1,807,000
1891 - 92	201,344	1908 - 09	718,700	1924 - 25	1,904,000
1892 - 93	226,905	1909 - 10	740,100	1925 - 26	2,599,000
1893 - 94	247,796	1910 - 11	667-300	1926 - 27	2,680,156
1894 - 95	226,147	1911 - 12	806,000	1928 - 29	3,685,349
1895 - 96	243,350	1912 - 13	934,500	1929 - 30	3,209,315
1896 - 97	157,234	1913 - 14	1,605,200	1930 - 31	2,635,427

Source: W.W. Hunter, The Imperial Gazetteer of India, Vol. IX, Trubner & Co, London, Second Edition, 1886, pp.30-31 and also see I. Henry Burkill, Bulletin of Miscellaneous Information, Nos.178-189, 1901, p.187 Area and Yield of certain Principal Crops in India (Rice, Wheat, Cotton, Oilseeds, Jute, Indigo and Sugarcane for various periods from 1898-99 to 1912-1913), Government Press, Calcutta, 1913, p.22; Report of the Madras Provincial

Banking Enquiry Committee, Vol. I, Government Press, Madras, 1930, p.123 Board of Revenue, Season and Crops Report, Madras, in various periods, 1926-27, 1929-30 and 1930-31, p. 11

The above table shows, in 1881-82, groundnut cultivation was 71,163 acres, and it was increased to 279,355 acres in 1889-90. In the year 1890 onwards it was slowly decreased from 279-355 to 83,715 acres in 1897-98 due to falling prices of oil. Since 1901, the cultivation was continuously increased in Madras province because the farmers cultivated this crop very easily without spent more capital. During the time of First World War the demand was increased hence the British encouraged peasants to cultivate this crop in whole India. The bulk of kernel exported from the Madras ports and the French port of Pondicherry. The Coromandel type, and peanuts amounting to about 6 per cent exported to European markets from Madras Port.<sup>24</sup> These types of varieties were cultivated on the Coastal region and the interior region of Salem district then sent to the port of Madras from where it was exported to British colonies and other countries till the end of the British rule.

Generally, groundnut cultivation was less in Salem district because most of the areas belong to dry region. Only the Talaghat, Baramahal, Salem and Attur taluks were cultivated considerably. Before 1850, there was no groundnut cultivation is recorded in this district while it was cultivated neighborhood district. In 1869, groundnut cultivation was 6,644 acres and it was increased to 9,262 acres in 1870. From 1871 to 1875, groundnut cultivation was continuously decreased due insufficient rain. In 1877-78, area under cultivation was 181 acres<sup>25</sup> because most of the areas of this region affected by famine. (see below the table).

#### Area under groundnut cultivation from 1877-78 to 1896-97 (in acres)

Year	Acres	Year	Acres	Years	Acres
1877-78	181	1894-95	2,292	1907-08	30,468
1886-87	NA	1895-96	2,349	1908-09	39,093
1887-88	2,059	1900-01	1,465	1909-10	40,879
1888-89	2,111	1901-02	2,030	1910-11	42,774
1889-90	3,043	1902-03	3,815	1926-27	93,787
1890-91	2,546	1903-04	5,576	1929-30	173,884
1891-92	1,767	1904-05	5,540	1931-32	82,398
1892-93	1,881	1905-06	6,182	1932-33	128,305
1893-94	2,040	1906-07	2,756	----	----

Source: Boards Proceedings No.2353, dated 21 August, 1878, Boards Proceedings No.269, dated 29 June, 1888 and Boards Proceedings No.226, dated 14 June, 1898. and also see R. Ratnam, *Agricultural Development in Madras State Prior to 1900*, New Century Book House Pvt Ltd., Madras, 1960, p.379, F.J. Richards, Madras District Gazetteers: Salem, Government Press, Madras, 1918, p.224

**Note:** The tables exclude those of Namakkal and Tiruppattur taluks. From 1900 to 1906 are for Government villages, minor inams and villages under Court of Wards. In 1907 onwards are for the whole district of Salem, Season and Crops Report in various years.

Above the table shows, in 1890-91, groundnut cultivation was 3,043 acres, and it was slowly decreased to 1,465 acres in 1900-1901. The reason was that natural conditions in these areas were harsh and also the rainfall was scanty.<sup>26</sup> There is another cause a new variety of seeds was introduced by Mr. Parry therefore it was affected by diseases. Since 1901-02 this cultivation was increased in this district extraordinary.

The changes in the pattern of agriculture brought about improvements in the condition of agrarian community in general. Small peasants now were assured of a subsistence income. For groundnut could be raised by small peasants with ease. It could be cultivated virtually by anyone and anywhere. The cost of cultivation was exceptionally low.<sup>27</sup> It required minimum number of labourer, therefore the family member were enough to cultivate this crop. This was only a marginal contact with the monetized economy. They also engaged in a number of subsidiary occupations (mainly livestock farming and the production of construction materials) which both provided important supplements to the local way of life and also created articles for exchange in the valleys.<sup>28</sup>

The world market kept the prices rising, and although there was little improvement in cultivation practices. The crops like cotton and groundnuts were sold by the peasants in a fairly free market; they were no longer tied so closely to the merchants and money-lenders. But the freedom of the market place was as yet not universally assured to India's small peasants. Those who lived in a main area of cultivation, where they had access to marketing co-operatives and where transport was no problem, could get better prices than those who lived in remote areas, where they had to depend on a series of middlemen.<sup>29</sup> The prices in the markets in different districts of Madras province, however, do not always move together in relation to one another. The movement at Salem, and Tirukoilur taluk of South Arcot district the prices were highest in different markets at different times, e.g. the prices in October 1934 were highest at Salem.<sup>30</sup> Price spread in the market of groundnuts in the form of kernels. The producer brings his nuts to a decorticating factory at Salem, where the nuts after decortications were sold to an exporter's buying agency. The agency despatches the goods to the port godowns at Cuddalore. The producer's share works out to 75.7 percent of the consumer's price.<sup>31</sup> In the year 1937-38, only 500 lbs of candy (groundnut) was sold in the market Rs.20.11.0.<sup>32</sup> In Salem, taxes and municipal charges was levied only in some markets, while entrance to other markets was free, it was levied one *anna* per cart load at Salem.<sup>33</sup>

### Indigo Cultivation

Indigo is one of the important cash crops in South India. It was grown extensively in Cuddapah, Kurnul, Nellore, Bellary, North Arcot, South Arcot and Salem districts of the Madras Presidency. Its cultivation suffered due to increasing competition in European markets from the planters in Bengal.<sup>34</sup> A primary factor in the success of an indigo commodity chain was the ability to produce large quantities of indigo of a relatively good quality and to put it on the market at competitive prices. This in turn depended on advantages in terms of natural and human resources that a producing region was endowed with in relation to potential competitors. The presence of suitable land, water, and climate in some parts of India gave it an advantage over other indigo producing regions of the world. India also had the advantage of being commercially well-connected with Europe.<sup>35</sup> Therefore, the East India Company took this opportunities and forced Indian planters to cultivate indigo for the Company's export. Indigo culture extended along the coastal areas from the Krishna to South Arcot and inland to Kurnool and Cuddapah. The chief indigo growing district was Cuddapah, which produced a fine variety greatly in demand in Europe.

In 1850, indigo was cultivated considerable in the following areas like Hosur, Tiruppattur, Bharamahal, Salem and Attur in Salem district.<sup>36</sup> The Sub-Collector of Salem district reported to the Board of Revenue, indigo was not grown in this region. The reason is indigo planter did not properly maintained their land for production some times they made dispute with Europeans planters. The reason is indigo planter did not properly maintained their land for production. Indigo growers ploughed the land usually after the rainy season and prepared it for sowing. The number of times that land had to be ploughed differed from one type of land to another depending upon its elevation. The advantage of frequent ploughing was that large quantities of weeds were uprooted before indigo was sown.<sup>37</sup> One of the Collectors called Col. Cullen had stated that Madras indigo was superior to that of Bengal. The Collector of Salem was sent a report to the Indigo Commissioner is as follows:

“The indigo grown in this is not raised chiefly on lands held by Europeans. The only European in the Salem district who grows indigo on his own land is Mr. Frischer, the Mittadar of Salem. He cultivates the plant on a small extent of land belonging to himself, with his own ploughs and bullocks. Mr. Frischer deals largely in indigo. His usual plan is to make advances to the ryots, who contract with him to supply the planat at a certain price per maund, according to the quality of the crop. No native mittadar, zamindar, or poligar, grows this plant on their own private lands, or employs the ryots to grow it. There are seven factories in this district in which indigo is manufactured. Four of these factories belong to Mr. Frischer, and the remaining three to two wealthy ryots, who follow the same system as that followed by Mr. Frishcer in regard to the cultivation of the planat; that is, they cultivate indigo to some extent on their own land. They also contract with the ryots to grow it for them.”<sup>38</sup>

In the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, the European contractors did not provide any advance to the cultivators or the factory owners to cultivate and sell their manufactured commodities. Therefore, the native owners of the factories they sell the manufactured indigo at Madras, or elsewhere on their own account.<sup>39</sup> However in Salem district is concerned only few taluks were cultivated indigo such as Salem, Attur and Tiruchengodu taluks. The ryot considered that indigo cultivation was more profitable and very easy to cultivate this crop with small input. Therefore, indigo cultivation was increased due to the demand of the world market. The table shows below the cultivation of indigo from 1865-66 to 1885-86.

**Area under Indigo Cultivation from 1865-66 to 1885-86 (in Acres)**

Year	Acres	Year	Acres
1865-66	1,125	1875-76	2,087
1866-67	554	1876-77	1,934
1867-68	1,077	1877-78	2000
1868-69	932	1878-79	779
1869-70	NA	1879-80	917
1870-71	NA	1880-81	2,032
1871-72	1,794	1881-82	1,510
1872-73	2,653	1883-84	2,650
1873-74	1,746	1884-85	2,678
1874-75	1,125	1885-86	2,078

**Source:** Report on the Settlement of the Land Revenue of the Provinces under the Madras Presidency in various years 1866-67, 1868-69, 1872-73, 1873-74, 1884-85, 1885-86, and H. Le Funue, Madras District Gazetteer, Salem, Government Press, Madras, 1883, p.148 and also see Report on the Administration of the Madras Presidency, during the year 1880-81, Government Press, Madras, 1881, p.101.

Above the table shows in the year 1865-66, indigo cultivation was 1,125 acres and it was increased to 2,653 acres in 1872-73. Even during the time of famine 1876-77 and 1877-78 it cultivated more while the next year in 1878-79 was decreased from 2000 acres to 779 acres due to famine. Later, indigo cultivatio was considerable increased. There were several factories for manufacturing indigo in South India. Many of them were small and ill-equipped, owned by Indians, but there were also a large number of big-sized ones owned by Europeans firms. There was a indigo manufacturing factory in Salem district.<sup>40</sup> In 1910, indigo was a special product of Attur taluk in Salem district. Land not under cultivation was termed ‘wasteland’, as it did not provide

revenue. This was declared to be government property and taken over by the revenue department. Such lands available about 2000 acres in Attur taluk, this was also south to be brought under revenue settlement for indigo cultivation by the indigo planters.<sup>41</sup> The area under indigo cultivation was steadily decreased from year to year. It is a three month crop, and usually sown with *Kambu* in the month of June and harvested in September then it was carted off to the factory. It was chiefly grown as manure for paddy lands, its value as a dye being subsidiary. The ryot used to buy a cartload leaves per rupees. An acre of indigo is sufficient to manure three acres of wet land in those days. Mostly small peasant holdings cultivated this crop and made inferior dye for local consumption, though there had a definite market for the better grades.<sup>42</sup> There were seven factories for indigo manufacture in Salem district among the factories four factories belongs to Europeans and three factories belongs to wealthy native people of this district. The quantity and quality of Madras indigo was occasionally sold in Calcutta Market.

**Indigo exported from the port of Madras from 1915-16 to1922-23**

Year	Cwts
1915-16	26,171
1916-17	12,280
1917-18	3,411
1918-19	10,246
1919-20	12,132
1920-21	4,784
1921-22	5,039
1922-23	1,720

**Source:** C.W.E. Cotton, Handbook of Commercial Information for India, Calcutta, Government of India Central Publication, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 1924. p. 266.

Above the table shows that the feature of the export trade in 1915-16 was the heavy shipments form Madras. There was large decrease in the export of Madras during the year 1922-23. This port was affected in 1922-23 by the disappointing demand from Japan.

**Tobacco**

The tobacco was introduced into India, particularly in Deccan by the Portuguese at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Later it was widespread in Western and Southern India. Tobacco was largely cultivated in parts of Vizagapattinam, Guntur, Cuddapah, Bellary, Karnul, and Coimbatore district, but it was cultivated in less area in Salem, South Arcot, Tiruchirappalli Madurai, and Tirunelveli, districts of Madras Presidency. Tobacco cultivation was occupied less areas in the following taluks Tiruchengodu, Uttankarai, and Rasipuram. The tobacco was cultivated on ordinary irrigated lands being generally inferior. The season for cultivation varied according to local climatic considerations.<sup>43</sup> There was a number of varieties of tobacco such as snuff tobacco, chewing tobacco, *beedi* tobacco, and *cigar* tobacco were grown in Salem region. The tobacco cultivation is suited only to small holdings as it requires considerable attention and liberal manuring. The principal ports such as Madras and Nagapattinam were mostly exported to European nations. The chief centre of tobacco cultivation was Tammampatti *Firka* of Attur Taluk in Salem district. There the usual variety was that known as “black” tobacco and it was almost invariably cultivated in dry lands under well irrigation.<sup>44</sup> A light ferruginous loam yields the best quality. Tobacco did not grow for more than two years consecutively on the same plot of ground. The rain-fed tobacco was considered greatly superior in quality, it was grown in irrigated areas, though the outturn was less and labour involved more.

In 1874, tobacco cultivation was 9,000 acres, it was decreased to 7000 acres in 1877 and also further it decreased to 6592 acres in 1878 due to famine<sup>45</sup> In 1926, this crop was cultivated about 4,245 acres and yield 2000 tons<sup>46</sup> dry leaf and it was decreased to 3,417 acres and yield 1,830 tons dry leaf in 1932.<sup>47</sup> At Edappadi in particular a big trade had developed in tobacco stalks, which were exported to Bangalore, where they were distributed to Mysore State, Dharwar and Coorg areas. Most of the Kanarese people chew it with betel. It was sometimes converted into snuff. The stalks were also valued locally as manure.<sup>48</sup>



### **Impact of Commercialisation of Agriculture**

The growth of commercial agriculture made a deep impact on peasant economy in South India, particularly in Salem district through the transport communication particularly introduction of railway communication. It led landholders and even small farmer to cultivate cash crop in this region. The mode of commercial production was benefited to the British planters, traders and manufacturers, who were provided with opportunity to make huge profits by getting the commercialized agricultural products in this region. At the same time also partly benefited merchants (traders) and money lenders who made huge fortunes by working as middlemen for the British. The poor peasants were forced to sell their production just after harvest at whatever prices they could get. By the same time they had to meet the demands of the government, the landlord, the money lender and their family members' necessities.<sup>49</sup> This was found everywhere in the Peninsular India during second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Thus, a large share of the benefit of the growing trade in agricultural products was reaped by the merchants. The native money lenders (Nattukkottai Chettiar) were lent money to the peasants to cultivate commercial crops. After harvesting peasants were resettled their debt to money lender otherwise they loss their assets. Hence, the condition of peasants worked daily for hand to mouth.

Most of the peasants suffered miserably due to the British policy of commercialization of agriculture. Its result, the area under cultivation of food crops were reduced due to the substitution of commercial non-food grains in place of food grains. Between 1893-94 and 1945-46, the production of commercial crops increased by 85 per cent and that of food crops fell by 7 percent in whole India. This was led to decrease food grain production which caused non-availability of food to native people. The British were exported all production to foreign countries and the merchants were stocked the food grains which resulted the increase of price in the market during that period. This had overwhelming effect on the rural economy and often took the shape of famines and also further increasing of population too. Thus, the commercialization of agriculture in this region by British was also one of the important causes of peasants were poverished or sunk under more dept. Commercialization encouraged social exchange and it made possibilities to the transformation of South Indian economy into capitalistic form. After getting independence commercialization linked India with British Economy and the International economy too.<sup>50</sup> It led to the growth of high level social and economic system. The important contribution of commercialization reflected in integration of economy. It also created a base for growth of national economy commercialization of agriculture. It also brought about regional specialization of crops on an efficient basis. Commercialization effected traditional relations between agriculture and industry

### **Conclusion**

Rapid commercialization emerged as the central and complex characteristic of the South Indian agriculture as well as Indian agriculture. The colonial administration encouraged the commercialization of agriculture that improved the position of peasants in many areas of the Indian colony. From the 1860s onwards, the nature of agricultural production was determined by demands of overseas markets for Indian primary products. The first and second half of the nineteenth century exports cash crops such as cotton, sugarcane, groundnut, indigo, tobacco etc. The improvement of transport facilities particularly railways and steamships (Suez Canal) were helped agriculture by permitting some degree of specialization on commercial crops in this region. The expansion in cash crop production was accompanied by the building of railways after 1850s. This increased yields somewhat, but the bulk of the country stuck to subsistence farming. Plantations were developed for indigo, sugar, rubber and tea within and other district. Little was done to promote agricultural technology. There was some improvement in seeds, but no extension

service, no improvement in livestock and no official encouragement to use fertilizer. Eventhough production of cash crops increased considerably, this was marked by great variation among different types of cash crops. Big-land holders were gets loans from the Co-operative Societies for cultivating commercial crops while poor peasant's gets money from the money-lender. After harvesting peasants were resettled their debt to money lender otherwise they loss their assets.

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