



PRISON LABOUR & INDUSTRIES WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO PRINCELY MYSORE STATE (1799 – 1947)

Gangadharaiah . B .R

Asst. Professor of History, Govt. First Grade College, Gowribidanur.

&

Research Student, Department of studies & Research in History and Archaeology,
Tumkur University, Tumkuru, Karnataka.

ABSTRACT

Prisons are as old as human civilization. Jails were existed from the time Immemorial. We have plenty of references pertaining to jails across the globe. Even in ancient India jails were existed. The prisons in those days were not used for reforming the culprit by imposing imprisonment, but served only as places of confinement till further action was taken, i.e., execution, mutilation, deportation and so on. With the development of civilization the old methods of punishments were done away and imprisonment was replaced as a means of punishment.

KEYWORDS: Gender , Development, Women ,Work ,Sugarcane cutter.

INTRODUCTION:

The concept of reforming the prisoners also evolved over the time. Prison employment was not only served as punishment of the prisoners sentenced to hard labour, but also served a matter of public benefit. This is an humble attempt to bring out the facts of Prison Labour and Industries in the Princely Mysore State during the period of 1799-1947.

Work is the best alternative to channelize the energies of prisoners in a rightful way and for useful purpose. Inside the prison, keeping the inmates engaged in productive work would be helpful for their physical and mental fitness. The purposes of prison labour are to make the prisoners disciplined and i) help them to have self discipline: (ii) to make the prisoners self sufficient and to preserve their physical and mental health: (iii) to prepare the prisoners for return to society as individuals having specialized training for livelihood and finally, (iv) to give punitive value for punishment.¹

It would also infuse self - confidence among the prisoners which would enable them to think of returning back to society as a normal man. The greatest advantage of putting the inmates to work is that the wages earned by the prisoners can be utilized for supporting their family and dependents. Thus it would save the entire family of the

prisoners from being ruined. In this way, the inmates can help to support their family from inside the prison itself. In short, prison labour would be beneficial to inmates and at the same time remunerative to the State. So prisoners sentenced to rigorous imprisonment are assigned work inside the prisons. Prison labour is intended to develop a sense of personal responsibility.

History of Prison Labour Originally the jails served only for pre-trial detention or as a place in which to impose a specific punishment. The concept of punishment changed radically with the advent of the Industrial Revolution. The revolution created a demand for manpower and convicts became the answer. The government found that it could sentence offenders to prison and simultaneously receive a payment for lending these prisoners to industry. In effect, the government found it economically advantageous to sentence convicted prisoners to jails for a period of time as punishment. Likewise, employers found it much less expensive to hire convict labour than free men. The rise of industry and mercantilism along with its financial feasibility of utilizing convict labour spawned a proliferation of criminal laws that provided for serving different periods of time as punishment. In some foreign countries like Sweden, which is possibly the most advanced in its penal system, new institutions are built around factory.

In ancient times prison labour was conceived of as a form of compulsory labour designed to crush the criminal and in that process to tame him. Various hard measures were used for this. Devices like treadmill. It was a cylindrical device with steps every 7 or 8 inches. The convict had to step from one step to another, keeping his hands on a hand rail, and keep the mill turning. Though such a device could be used for industrial purposes to secure rotary motion, in prisons in England' in the early 19th century, they were employed for the purpose of punishment alone.² In 1846, a new device called the crank was invented by a man by the name Gibbs. This was a device consisting of a crank attached to a narrow iron drum placed on legs. In the interior of the drum a series of revolving cups scooped up a thick layer of sand at the bottom, carried it to the top and emptied it, to be again caught up by the revolving cups. On this machine a dial plate was fixed, which registered the number of revolutions made. This instrument was widely used in the period when task work was the method of prison labour. The crank⁸ were used in England in the 19th century with this purpose in view. The use of these devices for harassing prisoners were stopped by the turn of the twentieth century.

In India also prison labour was intended in olden days to humiliate, disgrace and finally to crush the prisoners. Gradually, the idea of profitable employment of prison labour and its reformatory impact began to gain ground. Still the emphasis continue to be on the punitive aspect of prison labour. The Indian Penal Code is based on the punitive aspect of labour when it makes a distinction between simple imprisonment and rigorous imprisonment: hard labour being the distinguishing feature of the latter.

The Indian Jail Committee has stated that, "it is the duty of the state to endeavour to reclaim and reform the prisoner in its hands by giving him the class of labour best calculated to interest and instrument him, to awaken his intelligence, to train him to habits of industry and application and so to fit him for free life".³

According to Mysore Jail Manual, all jail labour shall be divided into three main classes – hard, medium and light. The scale of tasks arranged according to these classes. The Medical Officer used to certify the class of labour for which a convict is fit than the superintendent used to determine the employment to which the convict shall be put.

All the prisoners who were classed medium or light labour has to be presented before the Medical officer once In a month. The Medical officer had the right to reclassify.⁴

The prison labour was based on some broad principles/purposes, they are;-

- 1.Since the labour was imposed as a form of punishment it must be penal in character.
- 2.It should help to reform the offenders by giving him work, which will excite his interest, induce him to exert his powers willingly.
- 3.It should provide a prisoner with such work, which gives practice to hand eye and brain.
- 4.It should employ as many as prisoners as possible.
- 5.Also it should bring some income to the state.

The jail manual also states that, while allotting labour caste of the prisoner shall be kept in mind. No Brahmin or caste Hindu be employed in chukler's work.⁵ No change of labour is permitted very frequently. It also states that, no prisoner shall required to perform labour, other than necessary for internal jail management, on Sundays, Christmas Day, Good Friday, the last day of the Moharrum, New Years day, H.M the Emperor's Birthday, H. H. the Maharaja's Birthday, the Lunar New Year day and Ganesha Feast day.

The prisoners were not allowed to be employed outside the jails, except for the jail purposes or under the special orders of the Government. Adequate provision was to be made that no jail industry suffer due to lack of labour. Only the convicts that remain over and above the number required for such industries shall be available for extra mural labour.

The Prisons Act of 1870, which was in force in Mysore does not contain a specific provision, as in the Indian prisons Act, IX of 1894, which forbids from keeping the labour of any prisoner for more than nine hours in a day, except in case of emergency.”⁶

Employment available in the prisons were fell into six main heads;

- 1.Service as convict officers.
- 2.Domestic Service.
- 3.Gardening and outdoor work.
- 4.Farming and agriculture.
- 5.Jail work.
- 6.Industries.

Those who were appointed as convict officers in the capacity of warders, overseers and night watchman, solely with discipline in the barracks, work sheds and the like. Domestic service includes cooking and servicing food, sanitary work, fetching and

carrying water. Gardening service usually given to men who will retire shortly.

Other outdoor work consists chiefly in keeping the buildings and grounds clear and free from dust and dirt, very important duty, though comparatively light.

Prison kitchen work attracts many prisoners. Some of this work such as grinding of Ragi and wheat, was rather very heavy. Only stronger prisoners were put to this work.

The industries or factory work was usually divided into unskilled and semi – skilled labour. The unskilled labour was purely for short term prisoners. The large majority of prisoners were unskilled. Those prisoners who may be regarded as trainable, with long term of sentence, were better fit for semi skilled class.”⁷

The maximum number of convicts that may be sent for extra mural labour is given in the Jail manual.

In Bangalore city ;-

Palace Grounds	50
Residency	15
Dewan’s Residence	15
Front Gate of the Jail	05

In Mysore City;-

Palace Institutions	60
Curzon Park	25
Gorden park	10
Government House	10
Dewan’s Residence	05

No Female convict shall under any pretext be employed outside the female ward of the jail. 8 The recommendations of the 1941 Prison Reform Committee, has stated that, the task to be imposed on any female or juvenile convict shall not exceed three – fourths of the task for hard labour prescribed for adult male convicts.

The prisoner was allowed to acquire required skill to perform the skill related work. The proportion of the prisoners employed as jail servants, (i.e., as cooks, barbers, water carriers, scavengers etc.,) hospital attendants shall not exceed fifteen percent of the total jail population. The employment of prisoners as clerks in the jail office or store rooms is prohibited. This was only to safeguard the jail papers or records.

All the prison labour was intramural, consisting of manufactures, gardening and public works. The convict labour at Kukkarahalli was valued at Rs. 23,717 in 1879 and Rs 22,642 in 1880. The total profit on the employment of the remaining convicts in jails was about half as much. The value of manufacturers in the Central Jail, Bangalore, for 1880 showed a profit of Rs.13.34 per head of effectiveness.⁹

The prisoners were employed on the high roads even before trial. Nothing was done to correct this evil by the commissioners until 1835. The next measure in jail reformation was to employ the convicts in such a way as to make their work a matter of public benefit, general example, and at the same time effective employment of prisoners sentenced to hard labour.¹⁰ The only question was guard and accommodation.

For the guard, sentries were posted in addition to the jail servants, and the accommodation was provided in tents and temporary sheds. The materials of which were pulled down, carried on, and re-erected as they change their encamping place.¹¹

The convicts constructed roads, the European overseers attached to the Madras Sappers and Miners were appointed to direct their work. The scheme was very successful. The Agumbe Pass was opened with the aid of this convict labour.¹²

Dobbs carried the experiment a little further. He did not employ every able bodied convict on road work. He made an exception of, "Iron smith, potters, carpenters and intelligent individuals of other classes who have been employed in a workshop under the Superintendence and a Government Maistry. These men have executed nearly all the wood and iron work of the Travelers Bungalows In Toomkoor Division, and have been found very useful in a district almost destitute of handicraft's men."¹³

In the small jails of Hassan, Kadoor, and Chituldoorg Districts, no prisoners were employed as warders, overseers or guards'. The system, which has many advantages, does not admit of being introduced in these jails, as short term prisoners only are confined in these jails. All prisoners sentenced to terms of imprisonment exceeding six months in the Hassan, Kadoor, and Chituldoorg Districts were transferred to the Mysore and Shimoga jails.¹⁴

During the year 1907-08, orders were passed for the levy, from the Departments using convict labour, of a hire of two Annas per head per diem, inclusive of guarding charges, so as to recompense the Jail Department for the convicts employed in the Palace and the Dewan's residence, no charges were levied. In 1922, the rate per diem per prisoner engaged on extra mural labour was raised from two Annas to four Annas.¹⁵

JAIL INDUSTRIES

As a matter of fact, the manufacturers carried on in the Indian jails are ordinarily limited to their own requirements and the requirements of Government departments. The policy of the Mysore Government in this matter is formulated in Rule 375 Of the Mysore Jail Manual, and was identical with that of British India.

The first object of the jail industries was to supply the jail requirements. When this one was satisfied, jail industries shall be adapted to meet the needs of the other Government departments. Than the jail industries look to fulfill the requirements of the general public. The jail industry which results in injuring the local trade should be discontinued.

In selecting the industries for adoption in jail care was taken to choose those which supply labour of a distinctly penal in character. The jail industries were concentrated, so that the whole supply of any single article shall be produced in a single jail. Multifarious industries in a large jail were objectionable.¹⁶

"Prison industries may be organized on an efficient and economic basis., must be placed under skilled supervision and run on business lines. The practice of claim : Rule No. 375-A states that the department of industries shall furnish free of cost expert advice may be required by the jails.

Rule No. 375-B states that the goods purchased from the jail manufacturing should be consumed by the Government departments.

Rule No.375-C states that Specification of the goods shall be fixed with the help of the Director of Industries.

Rule No. 375-D states that In cases of difference of opinion the opinion of the expert officer of the Department of Industries would be final.¹⁷

As per fixing the prices of the goods sold to the general public, the prices should follow as closely as possible the market price. The procedure for fixing prices prescribed in Mysore Rule 851.

The chief industries in the Central Jail at Bangalore were:-

1. Carpet and cumby making
2. Cloth weaving
3. Tent repairing
4. Gunny and coir work
5. Carpentry
6. Smithy
7. Pottery
8. Rattan work and basket making
9. Book binding
10. Lithography
11. Brick and tile making

In the district Jail at Mysore were:-

1. Carpentry
2. Smithy
3. Cloth weaving
4. Carpet and cumby making.¹⁸

In cotton the chief products were doosootie, dungarie and tent cloth, cotton carpets, towels, napkins and table cloths in small quantity. In wool, cumblies, horse blankets, carpets and rugs. Considerable success was made in horse blankets, as related to pattern and texture. Carpet making progressed very well, four carpets valued at rupees 729-12-11 were exported to England.¹⁹

The lithographic press was been bought from England. Twelve men were instructed in English, with the intension to employ them at press. Mr. S. T. Heard, officiating Superintendent of Bangalore Central Jail, reported in the year 1868, that he wanted to publish a bi-weekly paper for advertising purposes, to be distributed among the residents of Bangalore and its neighborhood. All the leading merchants have promised to advertise. Book binding was commenced on the 15th October 1868, 22 men were employed in it.²⁰

CONCLUSION

The modern prison system is the contribution of the British in India. In Mysore State too the British Commissioners introduced an effective system of prisons. The prisoners labour was well utilized in not only keeping them engaged, but a matter of

benefit for them as well as the state. The prisoners not only learnt skills but also earned few penny by the time they were released. The Prison industries supplied many articles for prison consumption and to market outside, thus by earning to the state exchequer.

REFERENCES:

1. James Vadukkumcherry, *Criminology and Penology* (1983), p.217.
2. Mable A. Elliot, *Crime in Modern Society* (1952), p.685
3. Report of the Committee on Prison Reforms in Mysore, 1941, P.71.
4. The Mysore Code, Vol – II, 1944, P.566.
5. Mysore Jail Manual, Vol – I, P.99
6. Report of the Committee on Prison Reforms in Mysore, 1941, P.62.
7. Report of the Committee on Prison Reforms in Mysore, 1941, P.63. Mysore Jail Manual, P.100
8. B.L. Rice, *Mysore Gazetteer*, Vol, I, P. 729.
9. Administration of Mysore under Sir Mark Cubbon, KVN Sastri, P.94.
10. General Memorandum on Mysore, M. Cubbon, P.84
11. Administration of Mysore under Sir Mark Cubbon, KVN Sastri, P.95.
12. General Memorandum on Mysore, M. Cubbon, P.83
13. Mysore Administrative Report 1871-72, P. 59.
14. Mysore Gazetteer, Vol, IV, P. 269.
15. Mysore Jail Manual, P.101
16. Report of the Committee on Prison Reforms in Mysore, 1941, P.76
17. Mysore Gazetteer, Vol, IV, P. 269.
18. Mysore Gazetteer, Vol, IV, P. 269.)
19. Mysore Administrative Report 1868-69, P. 65.
20. Mysore Administrative Report 1868-69, P. 66.

**Table No.01. Showing the Employment of prisoners in Mysore Jails
(Source : Mysore Administration Reports)**

Year	Employed as Prison Officers	Employed as Prison Servants	Employed as Prison Gardening	Employed as Preparing articles used in jails	Employed on jail Repair Work	Employed as Prison Manufactures	Extra Mural Labour
1867						400	
1874		300	190			476	
1875		234	171			440	
1876	337		234		116	539	326
1881	104						
1886	86	196	88	78	12	215	80
1887	77	139	63	5	24	205	90
1888	45	122	57	63	13	177	50
1889	53	115	50	66	9	176	51
1890	50	118	61	81	11	195	44
1891		167	68		81	238	67
1892		154	75		83	230	60
1893		161	74		81	257	96
1894		133	54		68	212	65
1895		180	60		13	200	
1896		164	46		9	170	
1897		144	66		16	145	
1898		150	93		36	159	
1899	47	64	93	38	36	159	
1900	53	63	104	36	36	170	
1905						190	123
1907		413				196	223
1908		383				202	205
1909						196	225
1925	134	151				187	
1926	136	144				191	
1927	114	129				147	
1928	116	102				191	
1929	110	88				201	
1932	41	100				229	
1933		94				216	

Table No. 02, Showing Estimated Value of Jail Labour In Mysore Jails.

Estimated Value of Jail Labour	1871	1870
Value of labour as jail servants	15,668-02-0	11802-13-0
Building and Repairing	2085-03-0	4992-10-0
Grinding ragi, making cloths etc.,	3876-2-0	5324-4-0
Employed on Roads Public Works department or Municipality	13.352-14-0	16,163-7-0
On jail Gardens	8794-1-0	16,185-8-0
On manufactures	13863-1-0	16185-7-0
Total	57,639-10-0	64,220-8-0