EVOLUTION OF FOREST POLICIES IN COLONIAL MADRAS PRESIDENCY (ANDHRA), 1870-1947: A STUDY IN IDEAS AND LEGAL DISCOURSES

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work embodied in this thesis entitled **EVOLUTION OF FOREST POLICIES IN COLONIAL MADRAS PRESIDENCY (ANDHRA), 1870-1947: A STUDY IN IDEAS AND LEGAL DISCOURSES,** carried out by me under the supervision of Professor Atlury Murali, Department of History, School of Social Sciences, University of Hyderabad, is original and has not been submitted for any other degree, entire in part of or in full to any other University or this University

Place Hyderabad
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This is to certify that the thesis entitled **EVOLUTION OF FOREST POLICIES IN COLONIAL MADRAS PRESIDENCY (ANDHRA), 1870-1947: A STUDY IN IDEAS AND LEGAL DISCOURSES**, submitted by Mr V M RAVI KUMAR, in total fulfillment for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History, is original and the work has been carried out under my supervision The thesis or parts thereof has not been submitted for any other degree in this University or any other University

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DEDICATED TO

MY BELOVED FATHER

LATE Shri. ***VEJANDLA J. MARK***

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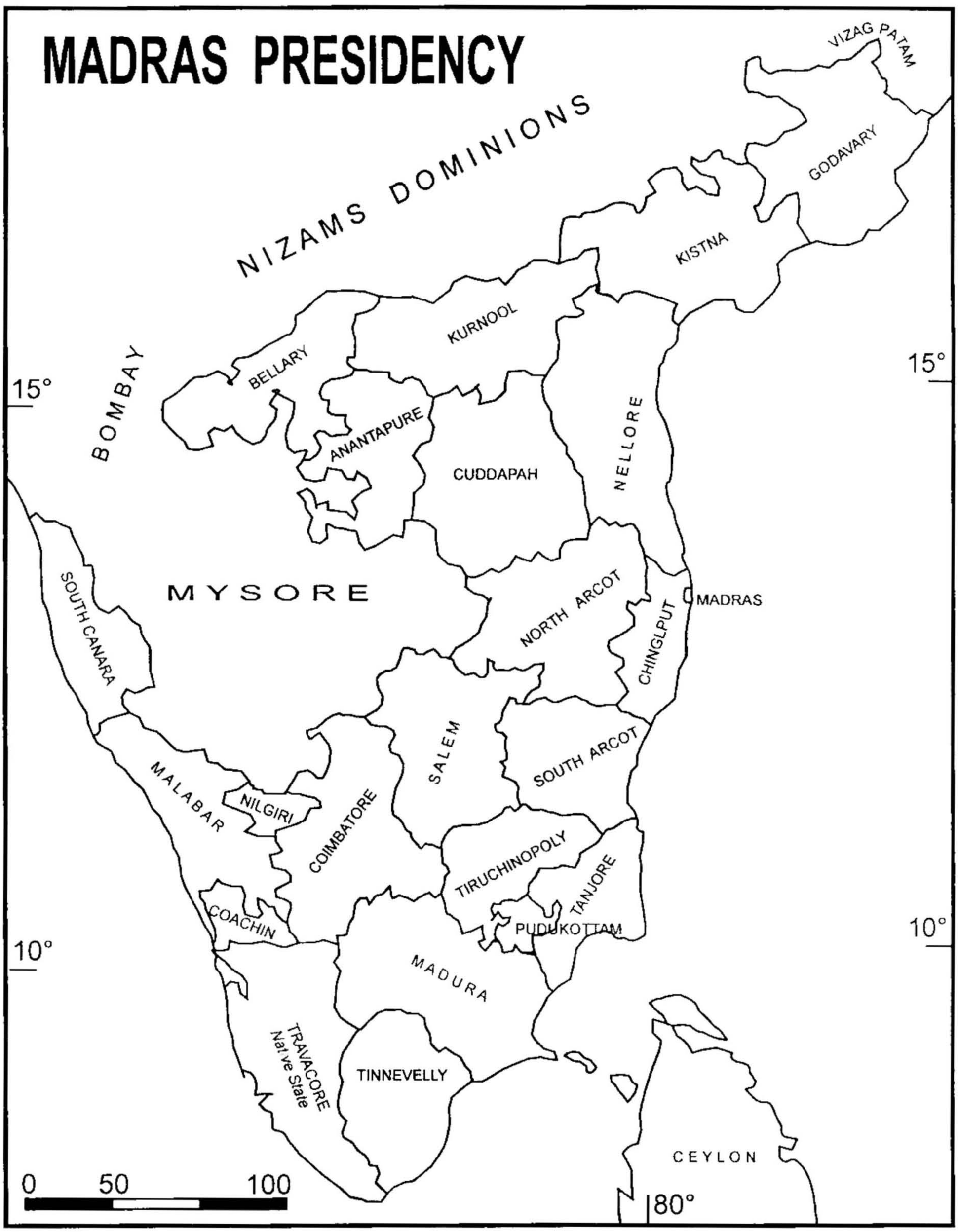
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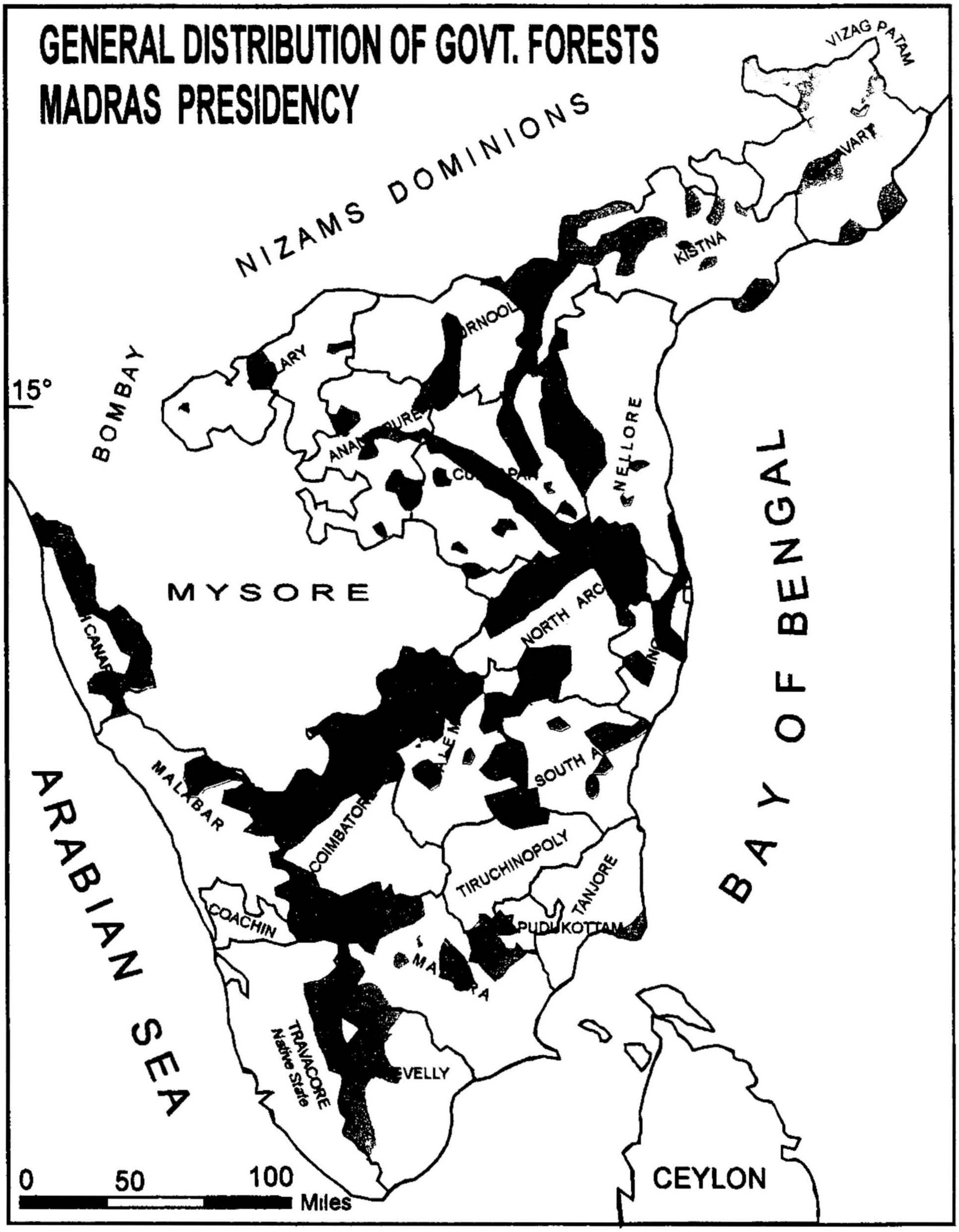
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(Originally Published by Government Press Madras 1885)

I
INTRODUCTION

Forest resource constitutes one of the important natural resources which plays an important role in the well-being and development of any society Predominantly in agrarian country like India, scores of people depend on forest resources for survival The forest landscape has been the center for diversified livelihood patterns in Indian history It played an important role in shaping the socio economic and cultural patterns of the Indian Sub continent During the British colonial rule, the relation between the people and forests was significantly transformed in India The colonial regime had established firm control over the forest resources and the people living in and around the forests and deprived their rights over forest land and produce This destroyed the traditional social management of forests by the local communities and alienated them from accessing forests The present study examines the history of the British colonial forest policies in the Madras Presidency thereby it focuses on how the relation between forest landscape and people had undergone transformation with far reaching consequences on peasant and tribal life world

Divergent cultures and varied natural resources utilization patterns were evolved in the Indian Sub-continent due to wide ranging natural climatic zones and diversified topographical conditions The traditional forest resource utilisation pattern had undergone significant transformation during the British colonial rule with its homogenized management pattern under the rigid state administrative control The colonial state had introduced several technological administrative and legal measures which have paved the way for gradual imposition of state control over most of the Indian Sub continent's forest landscape, where people's access was strictly regulated Thus, the imposition of centralised

state monopoly over the forest resource management was the product of colonial rule which considered as the root cause of the forest crisis in the contemporary India

In the pre-British period there was a close relationship between the living environment and people especially the tribals and rural poor depended on natural resources like forests grazing and waste lands for survival The people exercised the customary rights in accessing the natural resources for their basic needs like food fodder for cattle fuel for cooking, collection of leaves for manure timber for agricultural implements and raw material for artisans The centuries old customary forest rights were restricted and curtailed by the British colonial rule By evolving systematic legal and administrative mechanisms the colonial state exploited the forest resources and alienated people from accessing neighboring forests

The process of the evolution of the forest policies in the Madras Presidency had gone through several contradictions contestations and struggles within the colonial administrative structure on the one hand and between the colonial state and people on the other The present study documents the process of the evolution of the colonial forest policies and various factors that have shaped their nature and direction in the Madras Presidency with special reference to Andhra region The study of the colonial forest policies in the Madras Presidency enables us to understand the historical roots of the forest policies which continued to influence the contemporary forest policies in Andhra and their implications on the forest dependent communities The present study attempts to document the voices of multiple actors that went into making the forest policies during the British colonial rule in the Madras Presidency

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

I he present study on the British forest policies in the Madras Presidency does not deal with plantations scientific and administrative aspects rather it analyses the process of the evolution of forest policies and the discourses that took place within the colonial bureaucratic structure that went into making final policy The study concentrates on the three aspects that are related to the forest policies in the Madras Presidency one it examines the process of the evolution of forest polices reflected in the discourse of the colonial bureaucracy, two it documents how the ideas and discourses of the colonial bureaucracy translated into forest policies and three, it maps-out the implementation and implications of the forest policies formulated by the British in the Madras Presidency Thus, the study attempts to construct the history of multiple voices within the colonial bureaucratic structure on the one hand and by the people on the other

PERIOD AND AREA OF THE STUDY

The study examines the evolution of the colonial forest policies between the years, 1870 and 1947 It analyses the process of bureaucratization and legalization of forest landscape that have taken place during this period in the Madras Presidency It proposes to examine how the colonial state, in the name of forest conservation, imposed its monopolistic control on forest landscape with legal and administrative powers and the consequent alienation of people from accessing forest resources The significance of the period that has examined in the study begins with the initiation of the debate by the Madras Government on peoples' rights versus state ownership over forests in 1870s and concludes with the Indian independence in 1947 Within the span of about eighty years, several administrative, legal and managerial measures were introduced by the colonial state in order to utilise the forest

resources for its strategic requirements These measures initiated a momentous transformation in the nature of forest resource utilisation pattern with far reaching impact on the people and forest landscape in South-India The study addresses questions such as why and how the forest policies were formulated, what were the factors which have influenced their nature and direction, how the colonial bureaucracy in Madras debated on forest policies with special reference to peoples' rights over forests, how the forest polices were implemented and brought about the managerial transformation, how the rights of the communities were treated in the forest policies, how the native people contested the forest polices and what were the methods adopted by the colonial state in addressing these contestations in the Madras Presidency with special reference to Andhra region In other words, the present study analyses the nature of the colonial state s intervention and the consequent changes in the management of woodlands of the Madras Presidency

CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

To a large extent, it is true that the present situation provides a context for historical analysis of a particular period and theme The scarcity of the forest resources and social conflicts to access them has generated a massive debate on the patterns of forest management systems adopted by the Indian state The unprecedented depletion of forest cover brought about severe environmental crisis and resulted in severe social conflicts in various parts of the Indian Sub continent both in the colonial and independent periods [1] This situation created a context for evolving a critical understanding of the role of various

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Chatrapathi Singh *Common Property and Common Poverty Indian Forests Forest Dwellers and the Law* Oxford University Press (hereafter OUP) New Delhi 1986 Madhav Gadgil Forest Management Deforestation and People s Improvishment *Social Action* Vol 39 October December 1989 pp 357 383 These works not only document the problems surfaced due to deforestation but also question the exploitive nature of the government policies and demanded for overall revision of the existing forest policies echoed in these works

agents and agencies in shaping the physical environment and policy initiatives The social sciences, in particular, history attempted to evolve proper criteria for understanding the socio-ecological problems and thus contributed for a better understanding of ecological crisis in India In this context, the ecological approach to study Indian history acquired prominence, which later evolved into 'Environmental History".[2] The main object of this enquiry is to study the role of the human agency in changing the physical environment in time and space

The two important factors which are responsible for the emergence of the eco-historical consciousness in the Indian academic circle one, the socio-ecological movements pioneered by the Chipko movement and two the American environmental history writings While the contemporary environmental crisis gave immediate impulse and the American activist and academic history writings on ecology and environmental themes provided the theoretical formulations to the historical writings pertaining to environmental concepts from historical prescriptive in India, particularly from the mid 1980s

In the contemporary India the socio ecological movements demanding access to forest resources influenced the Indian historical enquiry These movements are mainly rooted in the ideology of the environmentalism for the poor The intellectuals sympathetic to these movements evolved a critique of orientation of economic planning in

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Stewart A Mart Environmental History Profile of a Developing Field *The History Teacher* Vol 31 No 3 May 1998 pp 351 368 Alfred W Crosby The Past and Present of Environmental History *The American Historical Review* Vol 100 No 7 October 1995 pp 1177 1189 The term Environmental History is widely used in the historical narratives pertaining to history of human agency s intervention in the management of forests wild life water and other natural resources in the United State of America The widely accepted definition for this historical enquiry is the history of the role and place of nature in human life

Madhav Gadgil and Ramachandra Guha *Ecology and Equity The Use and Abuse of Nature in Contemporary India* Penguin New Delhi 1995 p 98

India its inbuilt bias in favor of commercial and industrial sector, and its negligence of ecological considerations They emphasised on the necessity of an alternative framework of the natural resource management which would cater to the basic livelihood needs of the rural poor This ecological sensibility resulted in publication of several articles books and reports on environmental problems in India [4]

The Indian environmental historiography focuses on two important points first is to find the alternative strategies of natural resource management systems, which resulted in search for the indigenous resource utilization patterns as existed in Indian history and second is to trace the roots of modern environmental problems, which believed to have begun during the British colonial rule Waves of the social movements, especially the peasants struggles against the commercial forestry attracted the public attention in India during the early 1970s and 1980s and the Chipko movement was a champion in this direction It was followed by a series of movements against the construction of large dams and environmental consequence of many other projects [5] Noticeably, there have been different interpretations and academic discourses put forward on the nature of the Chipko movement Sociologists historians and activists attempted to assimilate this movement into the ambit of Gandhian, feminist and modern ecological movements For instance Vandana Shiva argues that " The Chipko movement is historically philosophically and organizationally an extension of the Gandhian *Satyagraha*" [6] Ramachandra Guha proposed

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[4] *Ibid* pp 99-100 and also see Ramachandra Guha (ed) *Social Ecology* OUP New Delhi 1994 This book consists of several articles on the environmental problems in India

[5] Ramachandra Guha *The Unquietwoods Ecological Change and Peasant Resistance in the Himalaya* OUP New Delhi 1989 p xi

[6] Vandana Shiva *Ecology and the Politics of Survival Conflicts over Natural Resources in India* Sage New Delhi 1991 p 103 Some more interesting works on this movement are Thomas Weber *Hugging the Trees The Story of Chipko Movement* Viking London 1988 Haripriya Rangan *Of Myths and Movements Rewriting Chipko into Himalayan History* OUP New Delhi 2000

an interesting interpretation by tracing the social roots of this movement He proposed that the Chipko movement needs to be seen as an expression of peasant discontent against the exploitative commercial forestry initiated by the British rule in the Himalayan hilly regions [7] Thus the British colonial forest policies and their continuation in the post 1947 period were recognized as the main reason behind the conflicts for accessing forests in the pre and post-independent India

Some of the studies on the Chipko movement argue that the pre colonial society in India had enjoyed the prudent pattern of resource use, which was disrupted by the British colonial rule This approach characterized as the romantic indigenous environmental discourse had its influence on the environmental history writings This approach is represented in a book edited by Geeti Sen entitled *Indigenous Vision People of India Attitudes to Environment* This book consists of several articles on the natural resource utilization patterns of various tribal communities in India Geeti Sen argues that the forest policies formulated under the British rule still exercise deep impact on the contemporary forest policies in India She claims that " The forest laws enacted by the British colonial rule are still in force and with the government claiming the jungles as its property to be exploited even at the cost of extensive marginalization of *Adivasis* [8]

Some of the studies on the contemporary forest policies in India have argued that forest crises in India are a product of the historical process especially the centralization of forest resources management that has taken place during the British colonial rule has been

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[7] Ramachandra Guha *Unquiet woods* p xi

[8] Geeti Sen (ed) *Indigenous Vision People of India Attitudes to Environment* Sage New Delhi 1992 p 3 This book is an edited volume consists of several interesting articles on the natural resource utilization pattern of tribal population in different parts of India

perceived as the main reason for social conflicts around forests in India Commenting on this aspect Mark Poffenberger and McGean argues that

> Destruction of natural forests for timber cropland fuel wood pasture urbanization and commercial industry have had profound impact on the lives of millions of rural communities These problems are deeply rooted in the historical process through which state forestry institution evolved over the last century The concept of bureaucratic centralization in resource governance, authoritative legislative strategies and management attitudes and practice that has been borrowed from the temperate industrialized world and widely adopted in many less developed tropical countries Thus the recent global crisis in forest management is profoundly embedded in the past [9]

Thus some of the works on the contemporary forest policies argue that the social conflicts on access to the forests in the independent India are mainly due to the colonial legacy in forest policies Some studies tried to trace the origin of debates and discourses on the community rights over forests in the context of the colonial rule and also demonstrate how these debates have a baring on the contemporary forest policies [10] Thus the study of the colonial forest policies acquired significance in India

One of the important features of the contemporary environmental movements is they tought vociferously for the protection of poor people s rights whose survival is critically dependent on access to the natural resource particularly forests For Vandana Shiva most of the ecological movements on the one hand argue for protection of nature and on the other demand for strengthening the people s collective rights over common resources [11]

Mark Poffenberger and Betsy McGean (ed) *Village Voices Forest Choices Joint Forest Management in India* OUP New Delhi 1996 pp 1 2

[9] Roger Jeffery and Nandini Sundar (ed) *A New Moral Economy for India s Forests Discourse on Community and Participation* Sage New Delhi 1999

[10] Vandana Shiva *Ecology and the Politics* pp 14 15

Vandana Shiva argues that the natural resource management should be localised so as to cater to the needs of the poor Shiva spelt out that

> For centuries vital natural resources like land, water and forests had been controlled and used collectively by village communities thus ensuring a sustainable use of these renewable resources First radical change in resource control and the emergence of major conflicts over natural resource management induced by non-local factors associated with colonial domination of this part of world The first industrial revolution was to a large extent supported by this transformation of commons into commodities which permitted European industries access to the resource of South Asia [12]

Vandana Shiva is of the view that the British colonial rule transformed the common property resources which are used by local communities for subsistence needs into revenue yielding spaces She argues that the pre British Indian Sub-continent was eco-friendly and guided by ecologically sensitive traditions To quote

> In the pre-colonial indigenous economic process, the levels of utilization of natural resources were not significant enough to result in drastic environmental problems There were useful social norms for environmentally safe resource utilization and people protested against the destructive use of resources even by kings A major change in the utilization of natural resource of India was introduced by the British, who linked the resources of this country with the direct and large non local demands of Western Europe Natural resource utilization of East India Company, and later by the colonial rulers replaced the indigenous organization for the utilization of natural resources like water forests and minerals that were managed as commons [13]

Thus, the British colonial rule and its continued legacy into contemporary independent India recognised as an important factor responsible for erosion of local village communities' rights over natural resources In other words it was the British rule that was seen as the initiator of the process of alienation of people from the nature in India The crux

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Ibid p 14
Ibid p 16

of this argument is that the social and ecological crises in contemporary India are rooted in the British colonial rule which had initiated the process of commercialization of forest resources by depriving the village communities in India

Some of the studies argued that the forest policies formulated under the British rule and their continuation are responsible for the crisis related to accessing forests by people in the post-independent India For instance Madhav Gadgil argues that the colonial forest policies were mainly formulated to meet the raw material requirements of various government departments and revenue augmentation in India He claims that in order to make forest landscape as revenue yielding space the colonial state had converted the natural forests into monoculture wood plantations Consequently tribals and villagers who depended on the various plant species were deprived of their traditional livelihood Further he opined that the British forest policies are responsible for environmental degradation and alienation of people from nature [14] He criticizes the nature of contemporary forest policies and demanded their re-orientation to cater to the needs of the poor in India [15]

Sharad Kulakarini and Sadanand Kanwalli argue that the British forest policies were formulated mainly to exploit the forest resources in the Indian Sub-continent They claim that the imposition of state monopoly over the forest resources management in India not only undermined the livelihood patterns of the poor but also continued to exercise influence on the post independent Indian forest policies [16] Some studies argue that the root

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[14] Madhav Gadgil *Ecological Journeys The Science and Politics of Conservation in India* Permanent Black New Delhi 2001 p 126
Madhav Gadgil and P R Seshagiri Rao The Problem in *Seminar* Vol No 438 February 1996 pp 12 16 This is a special volume consisting of papers presented in a symposium on Grassroots Governance
S Kulkarani and S R Hiremath (ed) *All About Forest Bill and Forest Lands Towards Policies and Practices As If People Mattered* Third Edition Samaj Parivatran Samudaya Dharwad 1995 p 16

cause of environmental crisis and consequent social protest movements in India is the plunder of local resources for the sake of global markets at the cost of poor, who critically depended on them for their survival Ashish Kothari argues that the British forest policies were formulated to facilitate the exploitation of forest resources for industrial use in Britain and expanding infrastructure in India He claims that the colonial legacy is still continuing in post independent forest policies [17]

Ramachandra Guha endorses the critique on the colonial forest policies and argues that the colonial forest policies deprived tribals and peasants by curtailing their access to neighboring forest resources For him the colonial legacy in forest policies still continues in India with little modifications [18] Thus the study of the British forest policies and their impact on the pre and post independent India has acquired significance in Indian historiography

Another important factor that has influenced the Indian environmental historical enquiry is the theoretical formulations engaged in the American historical writings Donald Worster one of the pioneers in the American environmental history popularized the concept of Ecological History that mainly deals with the human engagement with nature His book *Nature's Economy: A History of Ecological Ideas* examines the pattern of human engagement with nature in different periods in history He argues that the technology and needs of society of a particular period determine the pattern of human engagement with nature He argues that the western capitalism introduced in America was responsible for over exploitation of nature for market requirements He categorizes the science into two

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[17] Ashish Kothari "Forests for whom: On the Proposed Conservation Act" in *Ibid* pp 52-53
[18] Ramachandra Guha "Forestry Debate and Draft Forest Act" in *Ibid* p 100

categories i e Arcadian and Imperial, the former imbibed the intrinsic values and ideas to preserve nature and the latter attempts to create an instrumentalised world to exploit nature [19] These categories proposed by D Worster represent the indigenous and colonial pattern of utilising nature In other words, the arcadian knowledge evolved in tune with the culture and traditional ethos and imperial forces evolved the systems to exploit nature for market needs The main contribution of D Worster to the environmental history is that he developed a critique of capitalistic transformation initiated by the British imperialism and its implications for eco system and society in America

Another influential scholar in this field is Alfred Crosby who proposes the concept of ecological imperialism' He argues that the expansion of the European colonialism to different parts of globe had profound impact on the natural world He examines the European migration and settlement pattern in indifferent parts of the world and claims that apart from their superior science and technology weapons and biological components also played a crucial role in facilitating colonial expansion He claims that the plants animals pathogens and weeds that were carried by the European to the conquered territories not only destroyed but also altered the indigenous ecosystems and thus facilitated the European expansion [20] Alfred Crosby s study prepared an agenda for writing the environmental history that focused on the European colonization of white settlers in the America Australia

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[19] Donald Worster *Nature s Economy A History of Ecological Ideas* Cambridge University Press (hereafter CUP) New York 1985 p xi

[0] Alfred Crosby *Ecological Imperialism The Biological Expansion of Europe* 900 1900 CUP Cento Edition 1986 p 7

and New Zealand However, D Worster and A Crosby's works inspired the early environmental historians in India [21]

The main themes projected in the American environmental history are the process of ecological degradation and the factors behind it It also documents the ecological crimes which were responsible for environmental destruction and social dislocation during the European colonization in America In India Donald Wooster's conception of the environmental history became popular The main reason for this could be the existence of strong left oriented historical enquiry which articulated for peoples' rights on natural resources Thus, the American environmental history laid foundation for documentation of ecological crimes committed by the British colonial rule in India

The relation between history and ecology has also been examined by the historians belonging to the French Annals school historiography The term environmental history was not employed in their writings, but their works imbibed the ecological approach to study historical process In France, an ecological approach to historical enquiry was rooted not in the contemporary environmental movement but by a close and longstanding relationship between history and geography [22]

Fernand Braudel claims that the geographical factors determine and shape the human beings life style in any society He advocates that historians should examine and analyze the ecological and geographical factors to evolve a better picture on socio-

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[21] Some of the works on the American environmental history are discussed by Ramachandra Guha in Writing Environmental history in India *Studies in History* Vol 9 No 1 4 January June 1993 pp 1920 21 Ramachandra Guha and David Arnold (ed) *Nature Culture Imperialism Essays on the Environmental History of South Asia* OUP New Delhi 1996 pp 2-5

[22] David Arnold and Ramachandra Guha (ed) *Nature Culture Imperialism* pp 5-6 Ramachandra Guha *Writing Environmental History* pp 123 124

economic aspects of society. He proposes that historical process can not be understood without studying geographical factors.[23] He argues that though human beings attempted to conquer the nature but remained prisoners of climate, vegetation, and animal population and agriculture systems. He advocated that historians should study the geographical and ecological factors to evolve a better analysis on historical process.[24]

Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie emphasized the importance of climatic factors in historical analysis. He argues that climatic factors play crucial role in shaping human societies and institutions.[25] He claims that human culture essentially evolve in tune with the surrounding eco-system and its dynamics. Thus, the Annals historians gave importance to ecological factors in their historical analysis. However, their approach in employing ecological factors in history writings is not rooted in the contemporary environmental movements, rather in their fascination and admiration for examination of geographical factors and their influence on human being life style.[26] However, emergence of the strong environmental movement in the United States of America popularized the concept of environmental history and Indian environmental historians followed the American model rather than French style.

After mid 1980s, ecological approach to study Indian history gradually acquired significance in India. In Indian context, environmental history is being defined by David Arnold and Ramachandra Guha in the following words: "Study of human engagement over

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Fernand Braudel, "Is there a Geography of Biological Man?", in Fernand Braudel, *On History*, Translated by Sarah Matthews, Weidenfield and Nicholson, London, 1980, pp. 109-119.

Fernand Braudel, "History and the Social Science: the Long Duree", in Maurice Aymard and Harbans Mukhia (ed), *French Studies in History*, Vol. I, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1988, p. 76.

Emmanuel La Roy Ladurie, "The History of Rain and Fine Water", *Ibid*, pp. 293-317.

Ramachandra Guha, *Unquiet Woods*, new expanded edition published in 1999, OUP, Appendix, pp. 211-12.

time with the physical environment, of the environment on context agent and influence in human history" [27] In other words, they argue that human beings constantly engaged with physical environment in order to survive in doing so, they had destroyed, generated and modified their surrounding natural resource base They claim that the patterns of utilisation of natural resources differ from one period to another in history and the environmental history examines how this process has taken place in history In short, environmental history means the story of the relation between nature and human societies

Richard Grove, Satpal Sangwan and Vinita Damoderan, in their edited volume *Nature and Orient The Environmental History of South and South east Asia* defined the environmental history as the historically documented part of the life and death not of human individuals, but of societies and of species, both other and our own, in terms of their relationship with the world about them [28] This definition also underscores the human beings relationship with the living environment In short, environmental history means a story of the relationship of human beings and nature

Ramachandra Guha officers another interesting definition for environmental history as the record of what one age finds unworthy in another [29] He focuses on the process of ecological degradation and identification of agents behind it The definition of Ramachandra Guha illustrates the agenda followed by the early environmental historians i.e critique of the transformation brought about by the colonial state in ecological fabric and consequent displacement of people

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[27] David Arnold and Ramachandra Guha *Nature Culture Imperialism* p 3

[28] Richard Grove Vinita Damodaran and Satpal Sangwan (ed) *Nature and Orient The Environmental History of South and Southeast Asia* OUP New Delhi 1998 p 3 This volume consist of several articles on different themes of environmental history of South and South East Asia

[29] Ramachandra Guha *Writing Environmental History in India* p 121

The reason why the British colonial rule has been depicted as an ecological watershed in the environmental history studies according to Richard Grove that the colonial rule throughout the world accompanied by the exploitation of forests and environmental destruction However, after independence from the colonial rule, most of the third world countries were unable to reverse the process of destruction of forests initiated by the colonial rule Richard Grove argued that the independent governments' inability to address the conflicts around peoples' access to forests in the third world countries created a context for evolving a critical analysis of the colonial forest policies[30]

Thus, the pressure of the contemporary environmental movements rather than intellectual scholarly debates contributed for the early environmental history writings in India The Chipko Movement in particular, followed by a series of conflicts over the access to forest resources during the 1970s influenced the historical analysis of the colonial forest policies and erosion of peoples' rights that took place during the British rule This situation created a context for a critical understanding of the colonial forest policies and their evolution in India

REVIEW OF LITEREATURE

The British colonial rule and its implication on Indian society is a vast and complex phenomenon Bipan Chandra opined that the impact of British colonial rule on Indian society is a vast subject which has not been properly explored He is of the opinion that India represents a classic example of how the colonial rule undermined colony's progress

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[30] Richard H Grove *Ecology Climate and Empire The Indian Legacy in Global Environmental History* 1400 1940 OUP Delhi 1998 p 3

with exploitative policies [31] The British rule formulated systematic policies to make use of natural resource in India for its strategic needs Until recently the British colonial rule and its impact on natural resource management systems has not given due consideration by the modern Indian historians However the environmental history that mainly deals with the colonial forest policies addresses this lacuna, by focusing on the changes brought about by the colonial rule in forest resource management systems

In recent times some scholars have attempted to study the changes brought about by the British rule in the natural resource management in particular the forest resource management in India They examined the questions like how the ecological factors like climate vegetation, soil and forests influenced the Indian society and culture and how the natural resource utilization patterns were transformed during the British colonial rule? The most pertinent questions that are being examined in the environmental history are What are the systems and practices that had determined the pattern of natural resource utilization process in the pre-colonial India? How those systems were transformed under the British colonial rule which initiated the process of commoditization of the natural resources particularly forests? How the homogenization of forest usage practices evolved during the colonial period had an impact on Indian society? And finally to what extent this colonial legacy is still continuing? [2] Some studies argue that the British colonial rule formulated an organised state forestry system to appropriate forest resources for its strategic

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Bipan Chandra *Essays on Colonialism* Orient Longman New Delhi 1999 This book consists of articles on the nature of transformation brought about the colonial rule in India

Madhav Gadgil and Ramachandra Guha *This Fissure Land An Ecological History of India* OUP New Delhi 1992 Madhav Gadgil Towards an Ecological History of India *Economic and Political Weekly* (hereafter *EPW*) Vol xx 1985 pp 1909-13 Ramachandra Guha The Pre history of Indian Environmentalism An Intellectual Tradition *EPW* Vol 20 No 4 1 November 1885 pp 1939 52

requirements [33] Thus, in the early environmental history writings, the pre-colonial period was projected as ecologically prudent and the colonial period was considered as the initiator of commercialization of forest process

Writing about the colonial forest policies is as old as colonial forestry E P Stebbing had written extensively on the history of forest administration in various provinces under the British rule He brought about the four volume work entitled *The Forests of India* These volumes describe the history of forest policies in the British India and provide graphic description of the chronological events and various aspects pertaining to the colonial forestry These volumes mainly illustrate the administrative details such as important administrative measures, statistics pertaining to forest budget and reservation and brief narration on the forest policies in various provinces under the British rule in India [4] These volumes provide valuable information and an important source on colonial forest policies in India

Apart from E P Stebbing there are some contemporary books written during the British period that provide information on the colonial forest policies in India For instance Berthold Ribbentrop's book *Forestry in British India* gives valuable details pertaining to legal and administrative measures of the Forest department in India It also narrates certain important aspects of the colonial forest policies such as forest settlement, forest surveys

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[3] Jaques Puspadas Colonialism and Environment in India Comparative prescriptive *EPW* 19[th] August 1995 Vol xxx No 33 pp 2059 2067 Ramachandra Guha Writing environmental History in India pp 119 150 These two essays illustrate the relation between colonialism and Indian environment

[34] E P Stebbing, *Forests of India* 4 Volume series first two volumes were published by John Lane London in 1922 and 1927 Vol III was published by A J Reprints New Delhi in 1982 and Vol IV OUP London 1962

working plans, Sylviculture techniques and debates that took place within the colonial bureaucracy on people's rights over forests [35]

Dietrich Brandis's *Forestry in India Origins & Early Developments* is a fine contemporary account on the colonial forest policies in India He writes about the distribution of forest resources and their significance in providing useful materials, protecting climate and irrigation sources in India His book informs about the factors responsible for evolution of the forest policies and various important events pertaining to them He justifies the colonial state's intervention in managing forest resources and argues that systematic scientific forest policies could only be formulated and implemented by state [36]

R S Troup s book, *Colonial Forest Administration* narrates the forest management practices in some of the Asian and African countries Though there is a little reference about India, it deals with various scientific and administrative aspects such as conservation of trees for protecting climate, plantations, forest organization, state ownership, people's rights and forest legislation [37] This book advocates the need for scientific conservation of forests and justifies the role of state in safeguarding forest resources in India and other colonies of the British Empire

Another important contemporary source on the colonial forest policies is the journal entitled *The Indian Forester* It was started in 1875 and published articles and correspondences pertaining to forest policies These articles were written on various aspects

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[35] Berthold Ribbentrop *Forestry in British India* Reprinted Edition Indus Publishing Company New Delhi 1989

[36] Dietrich Brandis *Forestry in India Origins & Early Developments* Natraj Publishers Dehra Dun 1994

[37] R S Troup *Colonial Forest Administration* OUP London 1940

of the colonial forestry [38] For instance G F Persion writes on how the expansion of the railway network consumed enormous amount of the forest resources in India He argues that contractors from India and Europe have indiscriminately destroyed the valuable forest wealth in India He informs that the Forest department in India was established to regulate the indiscriminate exploitation of forests by the greedy contractors [39]

Some of the articles published in the *India Forester* documented the legal debates within the colonial bureaucracy on the nature of forest policies For instance B H Baden Powell written a critique on the 1882 Madras Forest Act and wrote the struggle between the Forest and Revenue departments and its influence on the forest policy discourse within the colonial bureaucracy in the Madras Presidency [40]

There are some articles, which criticise the British forest policies and their destructive nature S G Warty argues that in India tribals and peasants depended on forests for survival since time immemorial He felt that the customary people s access to forests was shattered by the forest legislations that were implemented by the British in India [41] But this sort of sympathetic works were rarely published Thus the books and articles written by the contemporary foresters and revenue officials provide valuable details pertaining to the colonial forest policies in India However the important point underscored by these works

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[8] D Brandis Memorandum on the Supply of Railway Sleepers of the Himalayan pines Impregnated in India *Indian Forester* Vol 9 1879 pp 365 83 H G Champion The Spread of Indian Forestry Experience and Ideas *Indian Forester* Vol 82 1956 pp 612 14 A Century Accomplishments in Indian Forestry *Indian Forester* Vol 86 1960 pp 778 80 M C Mobbs The Early History of Indian Forestry *Indian Forester* Vol 67 1941 pp 231 42

[39] F Pearson Recollection of the Early Days of the India Forest Department 1858 1864 *Indian Forester* Vol XXIX No 8 August 1903 p 312

[40] B H Baden Powell The Madras Forest Act in *The Indian Forester* Vol IX No 1 January 1883 pp 32 38

[41] S G Warty The Ryots and the Forests *Indian Forester* Vol LVII No 7 July 1931 p 369

is that they justify the role of the colonial state as a rational trustee in regulating and managing the forest resources of India

The conventional notion advocated by the contemporary colonial foresters who projected the British rule as the savior of the Indian forest resources from the destructive practices of the natives is challenged by some of the Indian historians, who employed a critical approach in understanding the colonial forest policies in India For instance, Gopa Joshi argues that one of the legacies of imperialism inherited by most of the third world countries is the wanton destruction of forest resources He proposes that the forest policies formulated under the British rule in India are meant for exploitation of valuable forest resources for strategic needs [4]

Ramachandra Guha endorses the critique on the colonial forests policies and argues that they were mainly formulated to exploit the forest resources for the colonial state s strategic needs at the cost of peoples' immemorial customary rights The main object of the colonial forest policies, according to Ramachandra Guha was to facilitate the systematic exploitation of valuable timber for the railways and other requirements of the British Raj He argues that this was the guiding factor for the colonial forest policies which aimed at appropriation of India s forest wealth in order to build the massive infrastructural networks He also points out that forest resources were being commercialised by the British to generate revenue He claims that the monopolistic control of state over the forest resources was imposed during the colonial rule in India was mainly aimed at profit maximisation [43]

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[4] Gopa Joshi "Forests and Forest Policy in India" *Social Scientist* Vol II No I January 1983 p 43

[4] Ramachandra Guha "Forestry in British and Post-British India A Historical analysis" *EPW* Vol 18 No 44&46 October-November 1985 pp 1882-1896 and 1940-1946

The main argument put forward by Ramachandra Guha is that the colonial forestry was commercial oriented and exploitative in nature

The study by Ramachandra Guha on the Chipko movement brought new dimension in understanding the peasant and tribal struggles that occurred in the Himalayan region He proposes that the Chipko movement as the culmination of a series of peasants struggles against the exploitative nature of the colonial forest polices instituted by the British rule [44] His study describes how the colonial forest polices were responsible for the deprivation of the tribal and peasant life-world and the consequent militant struggles for regaining customary access to forests In another article along with Madhav Gadgil he proposes an ecological approach to study peasant and tribal struggles against the state forestry in India [45]

Madhav Gadgil and Ramachandra Guha's book *This Fissure land Ecological History of India* proposes a framework for the writing of ecological history of South Asia This book is divided into three parts In the first part Indian history is explained in the form of successive mode of productions i e, gathering pastorialism, settled agriculture and industrial This explanation shows how the natural resource management systems were evolved in each mode of production In the second part they explain how the conservation ethics rooted in the Indian culture were evolved For them the caste based village society in India had developed a variety of institutions to regulate the use of living resources and also develop elaborate systems of diversified institutional structures for utilising natural resources in judicious way In the third section they describe the commercialisation of forest resources initiated by the British rule and deprivation of the forest dependent

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[44] Ramachandra Guha *Unquiet woods* p xi

[4] Madhav Gadgil Ramachandra Guha State Forestry and Social Conflicts in British India A Study in the Ecological Base of Agrarian Protest *Past and Present* Vol 123 May 1989 pp 141 177

communities and their livelihoods and consequent conflicts between state and people They argue that the pre-colonial Indian society to a large extent, enjoyed the ecological equilibrium with a prudent mode of natural resources utilization patterns regulated by a complex web of rules rooted in belief system and traditional culture They were of the opinion that the natural resources utilisation pattern in the pre colonial Indian society did not acquire the commercial character due to limited requirements by local village communities for their subsistence needs They argue that the advent of the British colonial rule marked a significant ecological watershed for it altered the traditional mode of resource use and initiated the commercialization of the forest resources in India This resulted in the massive displacement of various segments of the population in the Indian Sub continent from their living environment.[4]

However, the formulation of the forest polices in order to acquire control on the forest resources in India was not a linear process, rather they were the outcome of several debates that took place within the colonial bureaucratic structure The forest acts which were aimed at acquiring control over forest landscape, formulated after prolonged debate and discourses within the colonial bureaucratic circle While formulating the forest acts issue like people s customary rights over forests and state powers in regulating peoples access were debated and discussed by the officials of Forest and Revenue departments The agreements and disagreements within the colonial bureaucracy over the forest policies resulted in lengthy debates over the forest policies and their relevance in Indian context

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[4] Madhav Gadgil and Ramachandra Guha *This Fissure land Ecological History of India* 1992 also see Ramachandra Guha and Madhav Gadgil *State Forestry and Social Conflict in British India* pp 141-177 Ramachandra Guha Forestry and Social Protest in British Kumon 1893 1921 in Ranjit Guha (ed) *Subaltern Studies Writings on South Asian History and Society* Vol IV OUP Delhi 1985 Scientific Forestry and Social change in Uttrakhand *EPW* Vol XX 1985 pp 1939 52 Chetan Singh *Natural Premises Ecology and Peasant Life in the Western Himalaya 1800 1950* OUP New Delhi 1998

There are some studies that have analyzed the ideological discourses of the colonial bureaucracy on the colonial forest policies For instance, Satpal Sangwan argues that the colonial forest policies were formulated after lengthy and heterogeneous opinions expressed within the colonial bureaucracy He examined the discourse of the colonial officials centered on the forest legislation According to him the legal discourse among officials on the forest legislation reflects the nature of the colonial state and its ideological apparatus in India He argues that the colonial state legitimized its intervention in the Indian forest landscape by projecting the view that the forest utilization pattern practiced by the natives was detrimental to the existence of forest cover The colonial scientific forestry was thus justified on the grounds that it safeguards the Indian forests from the natives and their destructive use of resources [4]

Ramachnadra Guha categorised the ideological discourse of the colonial officials connected with forest acts into three groups one set comprised of annexationists led by B H Baden Powell who advocated that the state should conserve forest resources for the sake of public benefit second category represented by the bureaucrats who were sympathizers of the Indian people s customary rights argued that the state does not have the right to curtail the customary rights exercised by people over their neighboring forest tracts the third section were the officials who had followed the middle path advocated that the state is supposed to protect forests but at the same time it should evolve a mechanism to safeguard people s rights and privileges It was this discourse that took place among the

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[4] Satpal Sangwan Making of Popular Debate The Indian Forester and Emerging Agenda of the State Forestry in India 1875 1904 *Indian Economic and Social History Review* (hereafter *IESHR*) Vol 36 No 2 April June 1999 pp 1265 1273

colonial officials became an important source for the Indian Forest Act of 1878, which was the first comprehensive forest legislation in British India [48]

The main argument of Ramachandra Guha Madhav Gadgil Vandana Shiva and Geti Sen was that the pre colonial mode of forest resource utilization pattern was prudent in nature where biodiversity was maintained with the help of the rules and regulations rooted in cultural practices and sanctioned by precepts inherent in tradition They argued that the pre colonial states did not intervene in forest resources due to their limited requirements of forest resources In the absence of rigid state control, forest resources were managed by village communities They claim that the Indian culture played an important role in protecting forests in the form of sacred groves [49] For them the ecological equilibrium which existed in the pre colonial Indian subcontinent was disrupted by the British colonial rule which had initiated the organized state forestry with monopolistic control over forest resources The problem with this approach is that it romanticizes the Indian conservation ethos and claims that the Indian culture imbibed the values which were ecologically sensible They characterised the pre-colonial period in India as a golden age for there existed a sustainable natural resources management

While Ramachandra Guha Madhav Gadgil and other like minded historians examined the destructive nature of the colonial forests polices, Richard H Grove a western scholar proposed another dimension in understanding the colonial forest policies He argued

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[48] Ramachandra Guha An Early Environmental Debate The Making the 1878 Forest Act *IESHR* Vol 27 No 1 4 Jan June 1993 pp 65 84 Also see Mahesh Rangarajan Imperial Agenda and Indian Forests The Early History of Indian Forestry 1818 1882 *IESHR* Vol 31 No 2 1994 pp 147 167

[49] Madhav Gadgil Sudha Chandern Sacred Groves in Geti Sen (ed) *Indigenous Vision* pp 183 188 Madhav Gadgil *Ecological Journeys The Science and politics of Conservation in India* Permanent Black New Delhi 2001

that colonial forestry was not destructive in nature, rather the concept of scientific forest conservation was the product the colonial rule He claims that the colonial scientists employed in different colonies formulated the ideas and programs to control the deforestation in order to protect surface irrigation sources and rainfall He argues that the colonial scientific community, which was engaged in the search of Eden world in tropical countries in Asian and African continents, developed the scientific conservation ideas and influenced the government policies that resulted in initiation of the conservation measures by the state [50] He argues that in India, some of the East India Company officials particularly from the medical service background like Alexander Gibson in Bombay and Cris Pateik and H Cleghorn in Madras propagated the necessity of forest conservation and influenced the government to formulate forest conservation strategies [51] This approach undoubtedly opened up yet another dimension of colonial forest policies

In his study, Richard Grove traces the genealogy and chronology of ideas pertaining to forest conservation, global warming and El-nino impact during the colonial period He argues that the tropical environment became a metaphor for the colonial scientific community to translate their observations and ideas into conservation programmes He claims that the conservation ideas suggested by the scientific community influenced the government forest polices in India and other British colonies [52] Thus, for Richard Grove, the notion of scientific forest conservation is the product of the colonial rule which had saved the Indian forests from the destructive practices of native people

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[50] Richard Grove *Green Imperialism Colonial expansion Tropical Eden and the Origin of Environmentalism 1600 1860* CUP Indian prints Delhi 1995

[5] R Grove *Ecology Climate and Empire Indian Legacy in Global Environmental History* OUP New Delhi 1998

[5] *Ibid* p 2

Though Ramachandra Guha and Richard Grove's approaches differ in understanding the colonial forest policies they prepared a systematic agenda for writing the colonial forest histories However the early colonial forestry scholarship neglected the relationship between forests and agriculture and their intercourse Neladri Bhattacharya argues that ecological approach to study agriculture and urban studies needs to be given importance He argues that the relation between agriculture forests and pasture lands need to be explored by environmental historians[53] Thus he recommends the expansion of environmental history frontiers in evolving better approach for understanding the relation between the agriculture and forests

Christopher U Hill s examines the evolution of the sharecropping system from ecological prescriptive in the Dharampur Paragna of Purnia district in Bihar He shows how the complex intercourse of ecological factors, state policies and human activities bring about changes in socio-economic structure of the region He argues that though the colonial state had the agenda of profit maximization in its policies, regional, geographical and ecological factors and peoples' contestations significantly modified the state policies Thus he advocated for the need to adopt the ecological approach to study the agrarian policies[54]

Atluri Murali's work shows how the modernization process initiated by the colonial state that was aimed at maximizing the resource appropriation influenced the forest policies in the Madras Presidency He argues that the expansion of agrarian economy had converted most of the forest and waste lands into agricultural lands and resulted in debate within the

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[53] Neeladri Bhattacharya Introduction in the special issue on Environmental History *Studies in History* Vol 14 No 2 1998 p 166

[54] Christopher U Hill Santhal Bataindars in Purnia District Ecological Evolution of Sharecropping System *EPW* Vol XXII No 34 22 August 1987 pp 1450 1454

colonial bureaucracy on the need to evolve forest conservation polices He claims that the colonial forest conservation policies were rooted in the ideology of development that was aimed at expanding the revenue base by the colonial state He argues that the implementation of the forest policies severely affected the peasants and tribal world by the curtailing their traditional access to forests in the Madras Presidency.[55]

After the 1990s regional level focus on the colonial forest policies became an important feature in the colonial forestry literature These studies aimed at evolving an in depth analysis and documentation of the colonial forest policies in different parts of the Indian Sub continent For instance, Ajit Menon examined the forest settlement pattern in the Hohi Hills of the Madras Presidency and argues that regional level focuses on the colonial forest policies enable us to evolve a better picture on the impact of the forest policies on tribal livelihoods [56] Mahesh Rangarajan s study on the forest policy in the Central Provinces proposes a useful framework in this direction He demonstrates how the process of forest polices formulation and implementation was shaped by various local factors like forest distribution and differences between the forest and revenue officials [57]

Ajay Skaria examines the forest policies in the Dange tribal region of the Western India He shows how the Dange tribal society underwent transformation due to the colonial state intervention through forest policies He argues that penetration of the colonial state apparatus especially the Forest department deprived the Dange hill tribes by facilitating

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[55] Atlury Murali Forests Development Ideology and Peasants/Tribal Life World Madras Presidency Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries in B B Chaudhuri and Arun Bandopadhyay (ed) *Tribes Forests and Social Formation in Indian History* Indian History Congress Monohar New Delhi 2004 pp 181 208

[56] Ajit Menon Colonial Construction of Agrarian Fields and Forests in the Killi Hills *IESHR* Vol 41 No 3 2004 pp 315 337

[5] Mahesh Rangarajan *Fencing the Forests Conservation and Ecological Change in India s Central Provinces* 1860 1914 OUP 1996

the plain based middle men exploitation and at the same time, transformed their identity [58] This work shows how the tribal regions were opened for exploitation both by the colonial state on the one hand and by the plain based merchants on the other

K Sivaramakrishnan's study on the Bengal forest management is an extensive work He examines the emergence of scientific forest management, administrative and development regimes in colonial Bengal His main contribution to the colonial forest policies analysis is that he shows how the expanding nature of the colonial state and its resource requirements fashioned the nature and direction of the forest policies However, he argues that the colonel forest policies were very much influenced by the contestations of different communities in the colonial Bengal [59]

Sumit Guha's study deals with the relation between environment and ethnicity in the pre and colonial Maharastra region He argues that the complex intercourse between the tribal communities and plain areas on the one hand and the state's attempt to regulate these communities' access to resources on the other, determine the nature of the forest polices in the Maharastara region However, his main contribution to environmental history is that he explores how the environmental factors shape the identity and culture of people in any given society [60]

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[58] Ajay Skaria Timber Conservancy Desiccationist and Scientific Forestry The Dangs 1840 1920 in Richard Grove V Damodaran and S Sangwan (ed) *Nature and Orient* pp 596 635 *Hybrid Histories Forests Frontiers and Wildness in Western India* New Delhi OUP 1999

[59] K Sivaramakrishnan *Modern Forests State Making and Environmental Change in Colonial Eastern India* OUP New Delhi 1999 Colonialism and Forestry in India Imagining the Past in Present Politics *Comparative Studies and History*, Vol 1 37 No 1 4, January 1995 pp 3 40 A Limited Forest Conservancy in South West Bengal 1864 1912 *Journal of Peasant Studies* Vol 56 No 1 February 1997 pp 75 112

[60] Sumit Guha Claims on the Commons Political Power and Natural resources in Pre colonial India in Sanjay Subrahmanyam (ed) *Land politics and Trade in South Asia* OUP 2004 pp 82 99

There are several interesting studies carried out on the colonial forest policies in the Madras Presidency For instance, Atlury Murali documents the local communities and their forest management traditions in Andhra region He argues that mutual sustainable relationship existed among the agriculture, grazing grounds and forests in the pre colonial Andhra region He argued that the sustainable relationship between the eco-system and people that was existed in the pre colonial Andhra region was transformed by the colonial forest policies by instituting the exploitative resources extraction system which deprived the local communities from their traditional access to neighbouring forests [61]

Velayutham Saravanan focused on the impact forest of policies on the Malayali tribe in Salem district of the Madras Presidency He argues that the commercialisation of the forest resources initiated by the British deprived the forest based tribal economy by denying the customary access to forest resources He maintains that the British forest policies created favorable atmosphere for the plain based middle men for exploitation in tribal areas [62] Kavita Philip pointed out the strategies adopted by the Forest department, not only to control tribes but also to use them as cheap labour in forest conservation activities in different parts of the Madras Presidency She argues that the pattern of modernity initiated by the colonial forest polices negatively effected the forest dependent tribes in South India [63]

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[61] Atlury Murali Whose Trees? Forest Practices and Local Communities in Andhra 1600 1922 in D Arnold and R Guha (ed) *Nature Culture Imperialism* pp 50 86

[62] Velayutham Saravanan Commercialization of Forests Environmental Negligence and Alienation of Tribal Rights in the Madras Presidency 1792 1882 *IESHR* Vol 35 No 2 1998 pp 125 146 Commercial crops Alienation of Common Property Resources and Change in Tribal Economy in the Shervaroy Hills of Madras Presidency During the Colonial Period *Review of Development and Change* Vol No 2 July December 1999 pp 298 317

[63] Kavita Philip *Civilising Natures Race Resources and Modernity in Colonial South India* Orient Longman New Delhi 2002

There are some interesting studies dealing with the British forest policies in Andhra region David Arnold documents the tribal resistance to the colonial state intrusion in the Rampa and Gudem areas of the Andhra agency area He shows how the restrictions imposed by the Forest department s on *podu* (local name to shifting cultivation) and minor forest products resulted in series of tribal revolts (fituris) He argues that the socio-economic conditions of certain tribes like the *Koyas* and the *Konda Reddies* were disrupted by the commercialization of forests and their subsistence economy was replaced by money and commercially oriented economy Consequently the Andhra region witnessed a series of tribal revolts against the colonial state s forest policies [64]

Atlury Muraly s study on the *Manyam* rebellion in the Andhra region describes how the colonial forest policies intervened in the socio-economic conditions of the *Manayam* people and how the tribal lives became miserable due to implementation of forest policies He argues that imposition of strict regulations on *podu* cultivation, minor forest products, forced labor and corruption by forest officials created discontent in the tribal areas and prepared them to participate against the British government in the national movement under the leadership of Alluri Sitarara Raju [65]

Not only tribals but also plain peasant class experienced the severity of forest rules The colonial forest policies restricted their customary grazing access in forests by reservation and restricted entry in forests The peasants' discontent to forest rules was expressed during the national movement in the form of the forest *satyagrahas* i e violation

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[64] David Arnold Rebellious Hillman The Gudem Rampa Raisings 1893-1924 in Ranajit Guha (ed) *Subaltern Studies Writings on South Asian History* Vol I OUP New Delhi 1982 pp 88 142

[65] Atlury Murali Alluri Sitarama Raju and the Manyam Rebellion of 1922 24 *in Social Scientist* Vol 131 April 1984 pp 3 33 *Alluri SitaramaRaju and Manyam Rebellion 1922 24* Alluri Sitarama Raju Smaraka Samithi Hyderabad 2002

of forest rules and social boycott of forest officials Atlury Murali s study on the non cooperation movement in the Andhra region shows how people violated forest rules during the anti colonial movements that were part of non cooperation movement in defense of their traditional customary rights over forests Thus during the national movement the forest *Satyagrahas* were important agencies to express the public discontent on the colonial forest policies [66]

It can be noticed that off late there has been a shift in the colonial forest policies analysis in the form of the regional level focus coupled with the critical examination of local specificities and dynamics of the colonial forest policies Until recently most of the studies on the colonial forest policies conceived the colonial state as monolithic entity ignoring the fact that there were different contestations within the colonial administrative structure on the forest policies Akhileshwar Pathak argues that the contention between the Forest and Revenue departments on the one hand and between the Governments of Calcutta and Madras on the other, not only influenced the colonial officials' discourse but also the nature of forest policies [67]

Ramachandra Guha shows how the disagreement on the forest legislation between Calcutta and Madras Governments on the one hand and conflict between forest and revenue departments on the other delayed the enactment of forest act in the Madras

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[6] Atlury Murali Civil Disobedience Movement in Andhra 1920 1922 in Kapil Kumar (ed) *Congress and Classes Nationalism Peasants and Workers* Manohar New Delhi pp 153 216 Biswamoy Pati Peasants Tribal and the National Movements in Orissa (1921 36) *Social Scientist* Vol No 7 July 1983 p 32 Akhileshwar Pathak *Laws Strategies Ideologies Legislating Forests in Colonial India* OUP New Delhi 2002

Presidency He documents the resistance of the Revenue department's officials to the forest conservation policies proposed by the Government of India [68]

Vasant Saberwal's study on the Himalayan pastoral life shows how the contested interests of Revenue and Forest departments had bearing on the nature and direction of forest policies in the western Himalayan region He argues that divergent interests within the state departments, particularly between the Revenue and Forest departments prior to independence and between politicians and the Forest department in the post independent India, have prevented the Forest department from enforcing its most restrictive policies He claims that not only in the Himalayan region, but also in many other parts of the British India, the Forest department's policies were conditioned and determined by the opposition from the Revenue departments [69]

The British forest policies undoubtedly had deprived the poor and marginal sections by denying their customary forest access, but it is an interesting phenomenon to observe that claims of people, especially certain communities which have better mediating and negotiating access with the colonial state had strong bearing on nature and direction of the colonial forest policies The peoples' claims for forest access were so critical that the colonial state was forced to recognise their contestations and accommodate them in the policy framework Creation of the Van Panchyats in Uttar Pradesh and the Forest Cooperatives in Kangra were examples of this process [70] Vasant Saberwal's study shows

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[68] Ramachandra Guha *An Early Environment Debate* and Mahesh Rangarajan *Imperial Agenda and India's Forests*

[6] Vasant K Saberwal *Pastoral Politics Shepherds Bureaucrats and Conservation in the Western Himalaya* OUP New Delhi 1999 p 6

[70] Rojer Jeffery and Nandini Sundar (ed) *A New Moral Economy for India's Forests Discourse of Community and Participation* Sage New Delhi 1999 p 27

how the Havik Brahmin community that practices betel nut cultivation in Uttara Kanara district of Karanataka had successfully negotiated with the colonial state and acquired the privileges of carrying out cultivation in forest areas [71] Sivaramakrishnan makes similar arguments while analysing the Zamandari control over forest resources in Bengal [72] The present study attempts to demonstrate how the contesting interests within the colonial administrative structure on the one hand and peoples' contestations for accessing forests on the other and the colonial state interests in forest resources were expressed in policy narratives and their translation in the forest policies in the Madras Presidency

Akhileshwar Pathak argues that historically, forest landscape has been a 'contested domain' for various sections of the civil society and state [73] The main reason for this contestation according to Roger Jeffery is that forest landscape has different meanings to different communities and agencies For instance, for the Revenue department, forest is a barren space to be converted for cultivation, for the Forest department, it is a space to implement the silivicultural operations and for the tribals and peasants source of livelihood Due to these diversified interests of different actors and agencies, the process of evolution of forest policies was not a smooth process rather it was embodied with contestations, contradictions and compromise The main object of the present study is to examine how the interests and contestations of different actors and agencies and their policy narratives influenced and reflected in the forest policies in the Madras Presidency

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[71] Vasant K Saberwal and Sharachandra Lele 'Locating Local Elite in Negotiating Access to Forests Havik Brahmins and the Colonial State 1869 1920 *Studies in History* Vol I 20, No 2 2004 pp 273 304 Gunnel Cederlof 'The Agency of the Colonial Subject Claims and Rights in Forest Lands in the Early 19th Century Niligiris *Studies in History* Vol 21 No 2 June December 2005 pp 249 270

[72] K Sivaramakrishnan *Modern Forests*

[73] Akhilawaser Pathak *Contested domain Forest and Peasants in India* Sage 1994 New Delhi

[73] Rojer Jeffery (ed) *Social Construction of Indian Forests* Monohar New Delhi 1998

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

While examining the colonial forest policies in the Madras Presidency, the present study revolves around the following broad objectives

1) The primary objective of the present study is to narrate the evolution of the forest policies between the years 1870 and 1947 in the Madras Presidency It does so, by analysing various factors and agencies that have fashioned the nature and direction of the forest policies in the Madras Presidency with special reference to the Andhra region

2) It attempts to demonstrate how the wood requirements for shipbuilding, railways and other government departments and 'Desiccationist Discourse' that advocated for conservation of forests to protect climate, influenced the colonial state s policies towards the forest resources in the Madras Presidency

3) To analyse how the colonial bureaucracy engaged in the forest policy formulation process And what were their interests in the forest landscape in the Madras Presidency The present study attempts to documents the policy narratives of the Revenue and Forest departments' officials and the factors that have influenced their discourses

4) To examine the debates and discourses that took place within the colonial bureaucracy on legal aspects with special reference to the communal rights and privileges of people in forests in the Madras Presidency

5) It evaluates how the legal debates and discourses that took place within the colonial bureaucracy translated into the Madras Forest Act of 1882 and whose interests prevailed

6) To analyse the process of implementation of the Madras Forest Act of 1882 and to document the process of bureaucratisation and legalisation of forest landscape and its impact on the forest utilisation pattern of people

7) To describes how the customary access of people to forests was redefined in the context of the reservation of the forest landscape as state property

8) To demonstrate how the imposition of regulations on peoples' access to forests initiated changes in the relationship between people and forests with special reference to plain peasants conditions

9) To narrates the methods adopted by the local communities in contesting the forest policies implemented in the Madras Presidency

10) To analyse how the peoples' contestations for accessing forests were addressed by the colonial state

11) Our study attempts to examine how the traditional forest resources utilisation pattern underwent change under the British rule in the Madras Presidency and how that the British forest policies transformed the relationship between the forests and people

HYPOTHESIS

The Present study proposes the following hypothetical formulations

1) The consolidation of British rule and expansion of government apparatus in the Madras Presidency resulted in inception of several construction activities, especially infrastructure This situation created a massive demand for timber Our study proposes to argue that the

timber requirements of the colonial state guided the evolution of forest policies in the Madras Presidency

2) The driving forces for evolution of forest policies in the Madras Presidency were the timber requirements of various governmen departments and generation of revenue from forest resources The Desiccationist Discourse by the surgeon generals and forest officials for conservation of forests for protection of physical climate and irrigation systems was used by the colonial state to control the shifting cultivation and legitimizes the interventionist policies in adopted for the management of forests in the Presidency

3) The colonial bureaucratic structure was not a homogeneous entity rather it had diversified interests and priorities in forest policies In the Madras Presidency there was a conflict between the Forest and Revenue departments for controlling the forests and waste lands This conflict resulted in multiple discourses among officials on the forest policies that should be adopted in Madras Finally these discourses were converged in favor of state monopolistic control over forests expressed in the Madras Forest Act of 1882

4) The existing scholarship is of the opinion that the bureaucratic discourse on forest policy in the Madras Presidency articulated in favor of protection of peoples communal rights over forests The present study attempts to show that the hostile relationship that existed between the Forest and Revenue departments was responsible for the diversified discourses on the forest policies in the Madras Presidency In order to oppose the Forest department's territorial expansion the revenue officials put forward the rhetoric of the communal rights

5) Though there was a disagreement within the colonial bureaucratic structure on the nature of forest policies the agenda of the colonial state aimed at acquiring monopolistic control over forest resources was prevailed in the Madras Presidency Though the colonial officials discourse appears to be heterogeneous that articulated in favor of peoples interests finally the colonial state s strategic interests were given priority in the Madras I orest Act of 1882

6) Our study proposes to show that the colonial bureaucracy discourse on communal rights did not find place in the Madras Forest Act of 1882 for the Madras Government s strict forest conservation policy had turned out to be detrimental to the interests of poor tribes and peasants

7) After passing the Madras Forest Act of 1882 forest landscape in Madras was declared as government property where people's access to forests was strictly prohibited At the time of forest settlement the customary rights of peasants and tribals were not enquired into properly, rather converted them as concessions and privileges exercised at the will of the Forest department

8) The present study proposed to argue that the Madras Government was not an autonomous entity in implementing its forest policies Peoples' contestations for access to forests and interdepartmental conflicts between the Forest and Revenue departments necessitated the Madras Government to change the direction of forest policies The present study argues that resistance from people compelled the Madras Government to accommodate their demands in policy framework

9) The colonial forest policies discouraged the indigenous forest management patterns and undermined the community based forest management practice and alienated the local communities from their access to neighboring forests.

10) The present study proposes that the implementation of forest rules had resulted in severe problems to tribals, especially the peasants in the plain areas. For therefore, the formulation and implementation of the colonial forest policies initiated the commercialisation of forest resources and eliminated the people from having access to the forests the Madras Presidency.

METHODOLOGY AND SOURCE MATERIAL

The main objective of the present study is to narrate the evolution, implementation and impact of the colonial forest policies in the Madras Presidency. To carry out this task, we have mainly depended on the archival source material consisting of government orders and the proceedings of government departments.

The secondary sources that are used in our study mainly consisting of published books, articles, journals and un-published works. These works helped us in formulating the conceptual and theoretical framework that is employed in our study. A part from these works, the contemporary writings by the foresters provide useful information on the colonial forest polices. We also referred some of the old journals like *The Indian Forester* which published articles and correspondence pertaining to various aspects of forest policies.

The primary sources were collected from the state archives of Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and the National Archives in Delhi. These sources consist of the government

orders resolutions proceedings and official correspondence on the forest policies Since the present study mainly concentrates on the policy discourse and its influence on forest policies it mainly depended on the Board of Revenue Proceedings These proceedings consist of the correspondence between the officials of the Revenue and Forest departments and the Board of Revenue This correspondence reflects the debates on the forest policies within the colonial bureaucracy in the Madras Presidency

Apart from the official correspondence the Board of Revenue Proceedings also documented the records pertaining to forest settlement process and local officials reflections on the forest policies The present study examines these records from the years 1860 to 1940 These proceedings are available under different names i e from 1856 1885 as the Board of Revenue Proceedings from 1886 1918 as the Board of Revenue Proceedings (Land Revenue Forests) and from 1919-1940 as the Proceedings of the Chief Conservator of Forests However these proceedings some times mislead us by projecting view that the government policies as people friendly The present study has taken necessary care to overcome this problem by examining the sources from a critical prescriptive

Another important source is committee reports on the forest policies in India in general and the Madras Presidency in particular These reports documented the debates and discourse by colonial officials on forest polices Since our study mainly deals with discourse on forest policy the committee reports are extensively used Some of the reports have recorded the oral sources and interviews of different sections of people and officials on the impact of forest policies in some districts of the Madras Presidency

In order to document the responses from the natives, which was an outcome of implementation of forest policies, the petitions and memorials put forward by the peasants on grievances are used They reflect the grievances of people due to the implementation of the forest rules in different parts of the Madras Presidency These petitions describe the crisis which surfaced due to implementation of the forest policies in the Madras Presidency The Native newspapers consist of the translation of the contemporary vernacular news papers reflect the natives' discontent on the forest policies These newspapers of Telugu and Tamil published articles and reports which represented the perception of the native intelligentsia on the forest polices and their implication in the Madras Presidency

The Working Plans prepared by the Forest department provide brief information on the evolution of forest conservation measures in various important forest tracts of the Madras Presidency The Annual Administrative Reports of the Forest department give statistical information on forest reservation, forest crimes and details on administrative activities While using the above said sources we have taken utmost care and an attempt has also been made to compare the various sources in order to get accuracy and authenticity

CHAPTERISATION

To narrate the history of the colonial forest policies in the Madras Presidency the present work has been organized into six chapters In the first chapter a brief illustration is given on the research area topic, and its significance and an attempt is made to contextualize the Indian environment history writings This chapter provides a detailed survey of literature on colonial forest policies It also consists of brief description on the objective of the study,

hypothesis and methodology, finally this chapter describes geographical conditions and distribution of forest in the Madras Presidency

Second chapter examines the evolution of forest policies during the period 1800 to1882 It examines how factors like teak wood requirements for shipbuilding plantations activities wood and fuel requirements of the railways, debate on the effect of deforestation on climate and rainfall firewood crisis and debate on minor forest products influenced and created context for evolution the forest policies in Madras Finally, this chapter documents the origin of conflict between the Revenue and Forest departments regarding the control on forest and waste lands management in the Madras Presidency

Third chapter illustrates the nature of the legal debates, ideas and discourses by the colonial officials in the Madras Presidency In doing so, it focuses on the multiple narratives put forward by the Madras official on the communal right and privileges of people over forests It examines how the hostile relations between the Forest and Revenue departments influenced the officials' discourse on forests legislation An attempt is made to analyze the influence of this discourse on the Madras Forest Act of 1882

Fourth chapter analyses the process of implementation of Madras Forest Act of 1882 This chapter documents the forest settlement process sanctioned by the Madras Forest Act in Madras with special reference to the Andhra region It also shows the legalization and bureaucratization of forest landscape and its impact on the customary rights of people It also briefly discusses the administrative changes that took place up to the 1940s

Fifth chapter describes people's response to the implementation of the forest policies in the Madras Presidency It focuses mainly on forest policies' impact on the forest dependent communities This chapter does not deal with the violent movements that were erupted due the restriction on by imposing forest rule rather it describes the response from the native people through petitions and reports in the contemporary newspapers Finally it shows how the contestation of plain peasants persuaded the government and how their interests were accommodated in the forest policy framework

Sixth chapter is conclusion and summary where an attempt is made to draw some of the findings The present study mainly focuses on the regional level process of the forest policies formation The present study attempts to show that the forest policies were contested on one hand within the bureaucracy and on the other by people Each stakeholder attempted to press their interests in the policy framework However, these contestations were accommodated with lesser or greater degrees, within the framework of the colonial state's monopolistic control over forests resources for its strategic requirements

GEOGRAPHY OF MADRAS PRESIDNECY

The Madras Presidency, officially known as the Presidency of Fort St George occupies the southern portion from latitude of 20^0 18 on the eastern coast and latitude on the western coast to the Cape Comorian in latitude 8 4 the longitude range from 74 90^0 to 84 15^0 The extreme linear length of the Presidency, from north-east to south-west, is 950 miles Excluding the five native states the area of Presidency was 141,075 squire miles

Geographically the Madras Presidency was roughly divided into three parts one, the long broad eastern coast two, the shorter and narrow western coast, and third part is that

the high tableland in the interior These divisions are determined by two mountain ranges of the eastern and western ghats which gave the physical configuration to South India

THE EASTERN GHATS

The Eastern Ghats form a continuation of hill system running in a south-west direction almost through the entire length of Madras until they lose themselves in the Nilgiris hills and join there in with the western range Their average height is 1,500 feet and for most part they leave broad expanse of lowland between their base and the sea Their line pieced by the Godavery, the Kistna and the Cauvary River as well as by minor streams The Eastern Ghats do not have dense forests but consist of valuable timber trees such as teak, sandalwood and thick grass on hill slopes The Godavery region is known for teak, and sal trees are found in the Vizagapatam region and the Nallamallai forests are famous for various valuable woods and grass Important feature of the Eastern Ghats is that these hills are clothed with thick rich grass Most of the peasants send cattle to these hills during the agriculture off season These ghats also provide shelter for some of the tribes such as the Koyes, the Konda Reddis and the Chenchus, who lived since time immemorial on forest products and shifting cultivation

THE WESTERN GHATS

The Western Ghats, stretches southwards continuously along the shore of the Arabian Sea from the north of Bombay, satisfying all the characteristics of a mountain range Rising steeply at a distance of 10 50 miles they catch greater part of the rainfall of the monsoon Some of their peaks attain an elevation of 5,000-8000 feet These mountains are places of several valuable products like betel-leaf, arca-nut, ginger, cardamoms and pepper The

upper districts in these ghats are places for fine timber trees, particularly teak, sandal and other valuable timber trees [74] The west coast was a place for many valuable forests products and attracted the attention of the East India Company. In fact it became a center for initial forest exploration and exploitation operations

INTERIOR LAND

The interior between the two mountain chains consist mainly of successive tablelands supported by the opposite ghats and by chains crossing from one to the other There are again in the south various minor hill systems The Nilgiris form the junction for the two ranges and consist of the highest peak in the Southern India There are also outlying spurs and masses of hills of which the Shevaroys in Salem district, the Anamalai in Coimbatore district and the Palani hill in Madura district are the most important geographical entities

The geography of the Madras Presidency shows the diversity with vast mountain chains on which forest cover occupies substantial portion and extensive plain areas It is also known for diversified climatic conditions from marshy lands of the west coast to aired ceded districts and cool temperate place like Nilgiris to hottest places in some of the northern Circar districts Thus this diversity paved way for diversified composition of vegetation in different parts of the Madras Presidency

DISTRIBUTION OF FOREST COVER

Generally forest cover is classified according to their composition of the natural vegetation climate, soil and other physical characteristics. The classification and distribution of forests in the Madras Presidency is briefly as follows

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[74] C D MecLean *Manual of the Administration of the Madras Presidency* Vol II Asian Educational Services Delhi 1985 p 16

EVERGREEN FORESTS

The West Coast consists of evergreen forests which occupied the districts of Konkan, Canara Malabar, and Travancore, and the western scarps of the great mountain ranges behind them in the Maratha country, Coorg, Nilgiris and Anamalai hills Trees in this forest zone are valuable and often grow to enormous size These forests attracted the attention of the East India Company mainly because they were sources of valuable trees such as teak and sandal woods

CARNATIC EVERGREEN FOREST ZONE

This forest zone consists of commercially valuable timber trees The area in which this class of forest is found begins at the Mahanadi located in Kurnool and goes down almost the whole length of the eastern cost, the best forests being probably those of Nellore, Cuddapah, and North Arcot districts Important tree species found here are *Mimusops hexandra Diospyros Edenum Pterospermum Eugenia Memecylon and Pleurostylia* These are the source of fuel and give some of the hardest woods of the country

DECIDUOUS FORESTS

This class of forests is found in Bellary Cuddapah and Mysore hills and in some regions of Circar districts from the Mahanadi to the Kintan This region is known for Sandal trees which is abundant on the hill range of Bellary Coimbatore, and Salem and the northern slopes of the Nilgiri districts [75]

Tribal people in various parts of the Madras Presidency were critically dependent on the forest produce for survival In Andhra region, especially in the Eastern Ghats tribals

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[75] R Ribbentrop *Forestry in British India* Indus publishing house New Delhi 1989 pp 32-35

made living by selling fire-wood honey and other forest produces in plain areas Hill tribes for their sustenance not only depended on minor forest products, but also carried on shifting cultivation known as *podu* in Andhra region The peasants in plains also critically depended on neighboring forests for wood for plough and other agricultural implements leaves for manuring fields, grazing for cattle, firewood and other purpose Thus forests played a pivotal role in peasants and tribal world

The advent of the British rule and its consolidation was a departing mark in forest resource utilization in South India After 1800 the colonial state appropriated enormous amount of wood for shipbuilding and the railway track constriction At the same time the state also encouraged the unprecedented agrarian expansion These processes resulted in large scale clearance of forest lands for agriculture This situation resulted in more pressure on the forest resource base It was this was context that compelled the colonial to formulate the forest policies in the Madras Presidency The next chapter of the present study describes the driving factors that have shaped the nature of forest policies in the Madras Presidency

II
EVOLUTION OF FOREST POLICIES IN THE MADRAS PRESIDNECY

By the end of the 18th century the Fast India Company had established its political control over most of the South Indian territories In the first half of the 19th century, the colonial state attempted to create infrastructure in the form of shipbuilding railways and road networks These activities in particular the railways generated lot of demand for forest resources The early colonial forest policies in the Madras Presidency were therefore aimed at catering to the needs of government departments The present chapter examines the evolution of forest policies during the years 1800 and 1882 The significance of this period is that it witnessed intervention by the colonial state in the Madras Presidency in the management of its woodlands The state also consolidated its control over forests by promulgating the Madras Forest Act of 1882 Within a span of eighty ears, the Madras Government's perception on the management of forest resources had undergone change under the influence of various factors This chapter examines the factors responsible for deforestation which compelled the Madras Government to formulate the monopolistic forest policies The main object of the present chapter is therefore to analyse the factors that have influenced the colonial state s perception towards the management of the forest resources in the Madras Presidency

In this chapter, we narrate four important aspects of the British forest policies in the Madras Presidency Fiist, we demonstiate how the factors such as teak wood requirements of various departments, in particular the railways anxieties of colonial officials on deforestation and its negative influence on climate and irrigation sources fire wood requirements of people and question of access to minor forest products influenced the

Madras Government's policy interventions for the management of forest resources Second it analyses debates that took place within the colonial administrative structure on the nature of policy initiatives that should be adopted for management of forest resources Third it describes the struggle that took place between the officials of Forest and Revenue departments on the question of controlling the forest resources, and finally it attempts to assess how the interdepartmental rivalry influenced the revenue officials' discourse on forest policies in the Madras Presidency

EAST INDIA COMPANY AND EARLY FOREST POLICIES

The early East India Company s forest policies were associated with the exploitation of teak timber for various construction activities The first heavy demand for teak wood was created by the shipbuilding activities mainly undertaken by the Bombay Dockyard Since the teak wood was considered to be the most durable for shipbuilding the Company Government showed interest in acquiring control over teak wood resources This factor influenced the perception of the Company Government on management of forest resources The teak wood extraction and regulation of private fellings through the administrative measures were introduced in Malabar and Canara districts and also in some parts of the Western Cost and in Tenamerius in Burma [1] During this period the Company Government encouraged the European merchants to acquire control over teak wood trade The objective was to obtain teak wood from the local sources at a cheaper rate

The earliest attempt of the European merchants' involvement in teak trade was made in the form of formation of the timber syndicate in the Malabar district in 1796 under the

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[1] P. Stebbing, *The Forests of India*, Vol. I, John Lane, London, 1922, pp. 61-62

leadership of Machonochine who was an employee of the Company s Medical Service Though this syndicate had survived only for a short time, it had its influence on the subsequent attempts in connection with the supply of teak timber to the Navy requirements. But these collapsed due to stiff resistance from the native merchants [2] The Mulburn s book entitled Oriental Commerce published in 1813 mentioned the thriving teak wood trade in the West Cost He reported that in the year 1799 about 10000 teak trees were brought down through the Beypur River in Malabar for trading He informed that large quantity of teak wood was sent to the Bombay market [3] Most of the teak wood procured in the Western Coast was sent to the Bombay market where it was used in shipbuilding and to some extent exported to European countries

Along with the European timber syndicates' attempt to acquire control over trade in teak timber, the Company Government also attempted to formulate strategies to control it To start with, the Court of Directors in 1800 appointed the Bombay-Bengal Joint Commission to conduct enquiry on the internal circumstances of Malabar district and the nature of teak trade Based on this committee recommendations cutting of the teak trees that were below 21 inches in girth was prohibited [4] This rule was brought into force in Malabar and Canara districts where teak trees grows in the vicinity of the Western Ghats

Even the metropolitan government in England was interested in teak trade In 1805 a dispatch was sent by the Court of Directors to the Company Government with the instruction to enquiry on to what extent the Kings Navy could depend upon the teak timber

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Berthold Ribbentrop *Forestry in British India* Indus Publishing Company New Delhi 1989 p 67
F P Stebbing *The Forests of India* Vol I p 69
[4] Government of India *Hundred Years of Forestry in India* Natraj Publication Vol I Dehra Dun 1961 pp 72 73

supplies from the forests in the Malabar district[5] In response to this the Company Government appointed a committee to enquire into the status of teak forests in Malabar and Canara districts The committee viewed that forests were already over exploited and suggested for imposition of the regulations on teak felling in Malabar and Canara districts These measures were given immediate effect by proclaiming the 'Royalty Rights' over teak and other valuable trees in the West Coast Based upon the committee's recommendation Captain Watson, a Police Officer was appointed as the first Conservator of Forests in Malabar and Canara districts on 10th November 1806 His appointment was immediately followed by the prohibition of the all unauthorised teak fellings on 25th April 1807[6] This legislative measure was justified on the ground that the Company Government inherited the former governments' rights on teak and sandalwood trees in South India The anxiety to exercise monopolistic control over teak wood perhaps was also because of the French forces that had attempted to build ships by using the teak wood from Malabar forests[7] This may have been the reason that compelled the East India Company to impose strict regulations on teak wood trade But the way these regulations were implemented resulted in discontent among people and the native timber merchants A strong the timber merchant lobby could persuade the government and get some relaxations for timber export trade in 1813[8] As a whole the government regulations on accessing forest resources were resisted by the natives and the local governments many a times could not enforce the strict rules in forest tracts

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B Ribbentrop *Forestry in British India* p 68

Hundred Years of Forestry p 73 C A Innes *Madras District Gazetteers Malabar and Anjengo* Vol I Government Press Madras 1908 p 242

Board of Revenue Proceedings (hereafter BORP) Tamil Nadu State Archives 21 March 1871 Number (hereafter No) 1222 p 1947

Ibid p 1952

During the initial stages of the East India Company rule the evolution of forest policies was closely associated with both the Bombay and Madras Presidencies as the teak stocked districts were situated in the both presidencies In order to meet the teak wood demands of the Bombay Dockyard the Company Government initiated several policy initiatives In 1815 the Government of Bombay formulated the draft consisting of the rules for management of teak forests in Malabar and Canara districts It was dispatched to the Government of Madras for its consideration These draft rules imposed regulations on the teak felling by the private persons The Conservator of Forests was empowered to impose customs on timber and control unauthorized teak tree felling He was authorised to grant permits to the private persons to fell teak and sandal trees Thus the monopoly on the teak wood trade was established by the East India Company initially in Malabar and Canara districts [9]

Implementation of the Bombay Government's forest rules generated discontentment among the native timber merchants and *ryots* who owned teak plantations The revenue establishment epically the District Collectors also expressed their opposition to the restrictions on teak and sandal trees fallings In 1821 the Collector of Canara District reported that imposition on regulations on access to forests resulted in lot of hardship to people He argued that I believe the enactment to be so understood by the people however doubts may exist as to this construction and that no ryot can cut down a teak tree though situated at his own threshold [10] This internal opposition was perhaps mainly for two reasons one implementation of forest rules resulted in hard opposition from the native timber merchants and people that caused problems to general administration and second

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Ib d p 1954
Ibid p 1960

imposition of regulations on forest landscape became a hurdle for agriculture expansion which essentially was the main task of the Collectors at that time [11] Thus the Revenue and Forest departments contested for acquiring control over forest landscape with different objectives the former attempted to generate income by creating the private property that led to conversion of forest and waste land into agriculture fields and the latter tried to generate income by planting valuable timber trees under the supervision of a separate government department This contestation by both departments had a deep impact on not only on the officials discourse on forest policies but also nature of the policies in the Madras Presidency

Some of the revenue officials criticised the forest rules that were implemented in the Malabar and Canara districts In 1820 Mr Thackeay a Company official felt that the imposition of government monopoly on teak wood had severe implications on the private property in Malabar and Canara districts He observed that ... It has always been considered by every local officer except the conservator himself an arbitrary and unjust system and a great grievances by the merchants ship-owners and artificers whose trade is impended and occupations transferred to Bombay and by the land-owners whose private property has contrary to the whishes of the Court of Directors and of this Government been confiscated by the conservator [12]

Mr Thackeay argued that the imposition of regulations on peoples access to forests caused hardship The main reason according to him was the forest rules interfered in peoples private property, which resulted in anti-government feelings He criticised the

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[11] *Hundred Years of Forestry in India* p 72

[12] BORP 21 March 1871 No 1222 p 1961

section 12 of the Bombay Government's draft rules that empowers the state to impose property rights over forests in Canara and Malabar districts He argues that " This section would also act like the unpopular and barbarous Norman Forest encroachments on agriculture But if this section is passed, all that is now waste must continue waste, unless the conservator chooses to give it up, which from the spirit in which this office has been conducted in not likely There is no fear of agriculture being so much extended in these provinces to encroach too much on the elephants and teak [13] Thus from the beginning the revenue establishment was not receptive to the policy intervention for the management of forests in Madras Therefore, people's interests became rhetoric for revenue officials to oppose forest policies The main reason for this rivalry was that the revenue officials started perceiving the forest rules as unnecessary interference in day-to day lives of the people and create troubles for general administration

While criticising forest rules, the Malabar District Collector pointed out that the government ownership on forests was not clearly defined in Malabar district He observed that to quote

> The forests intended to be assumed by the government of royalties are those which lay along the basis of the ghats and occupying those woody mountainous tracts that are not inhabited where forest trees grow spontaneously or without human aid The orders of the Court of Directors cannot, I imagine, be construed into a right exceeding this limitation They cannot be intended to embrace so enlarged a construed as to assume as Royalties the property rights to every teak tree that grows not only in the forest property so understood but also in the inhabited parts of the country Were Government at once declare the produce of teak in Malabar to be a monopoly, and pay to those possessing plantations which have been reared by individual industry a fair price for their tree there would be no room for discussion, but the proposed Regulations make no reservation whatever in favor of the latter

[13] *Ibid* p 1962

> description of property although it certainly confines itself to teak trees growing within the forests [14]

Thus from the beginning the District Collectors opposed the interference of forest policies in the private property rights Similar criticism was also forthcoming from several revenue administrators For instance the Canara District Collector argued that forest rules became a serious obstacle for agricultural extension and unnecessarily interferes in private property of the people He described in great detail the instances of serious revenue loss due to the forest rules He argued that "... I submit it for the serious consideration of the Board, whether the contingent demand for a few logs of tree is to stand in competition with the probability of commencing clearing these noxious and useless jungles and the introduction of agriculture with all the attending benefits to man and to country and the government" [15] This description reflects the main reason for conflict between the Forest and Revenue departments in the Madras Presidency As a whole the District Collectors opposition to the forest rules was done to the perceived threat to the extension of cultivation which considered as the primary task of the Collectors After some time the Board of Revenue also informed the Madras Government on the severity of the forest rules in Canara District [16] The revenue officials' discontent was coupled with timber merchants plantation owners and peoples' resistance and forced the Company Government to abolish the post of the Conservator of Forests and his establishment in 1823 [17]

After 1823 the authority to manage forests was given back to the Revenue department and District Collectors They were empowered to formulate rules for forest

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Ibid p 1955
Ibid p 1961
Ibid p 1959
E P Stebbing *The Forests of India* Vol I p 71

management No further serous attempt was made by the revenue establishment toward the forest conservation It resulted in reckless exploitation of teak forests by the native and the European timber merchants In any case the Revenue department seems to have failed in stopping the exploitation of teak forests

Though no serious conservation measures were taken up by the Madras Government one would notice stray reference on importance of the forest management both in the public and private interventions In 1830 Nilambur Rajah represented a petition to the Bombay Government informing that the unrestricted teak wood fellings may lead to entire disappearance of forests in the region After giving due consideration to this representation the Bombay Government requested the Indian Navy Board on 20th April 1830 to prepare a report on the conditions of the Malabar forests In response the Navy Board advised the revival of the post of conservator and also suggested that the conservator s duties should be limited to the preservation of the forests No action however initiated by the Madras Government [18]

On the other hand the over exploitation of teak forests resulted in shortage of timber supply to the Bombay Dockyard and made the Collectors of Malabar and Canara Districts sensitive to the issue of deforestation Mr Clementson the Collector of Malabar District reported on the severity of deforestation in Malabar due to over exploitation of teak forests in 1838 He suggested the imposition of high duty on felling of undersized teak trees that would reduce the cutting of young trees and also suggested the imposition of customs duty on teak timber to discourage extensive teak felling By taking the Collector s suggestions into consideration the Madras Government imposed duty on teak timber export However

[18] *Ibid* p 72

timber merchants continued to exploit forests The revenue derived from the duty imposed on teak exports in 1837 was Rs 27,000 from exports of about 33,000 candies of teak wood [19]

The Madras Government continued to receive correspondence from officials on deteriorated state of teak forests in their respective districts In 1838 some reports were submitted by District Collectors to the Board of Revenue which consists of proposals on forest conservation They argued that the interference if at all necessary for the management of teak forests should be under the supervision of revenue officials [20] Thus from the beginning there was a controversy on the question of who should manage forest lands while later turned into a serious conflict between Forest and Revenue departments

The uncertainty in the policy in a way contributed to the exploitation of teak forests unchecked and result in the shortage of teak timber was begun to be felt in some districts of the Madras Presidency In 1838 Mr Smith the Collector of Godavary reported that the supply of teak timber became a difficult task due to destruction of forests Similarly, the Collectors of Malabar and Canara districts submitted letters to the Board of Revenue on deteriorated state of teak forests Thus the District Collectors of teak stocked districts became sensitive to the exploitation of teak forests but they insisted that forests should be managed by the Revenue department The reports of the collectors of Malabar and Canara propose that interference if at all necessary for the conservation of the teak forests should be left in the hands of the Revenue officers that no independent authority should be

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[19] *Ibid* p 75.
[20] *Ibid* p 77.

set up[21] It shows the attitude of the revenue officials who opposed the separate establishment for the management of the forests in the Madras Presidency.

At a time when teak wood depletion was going on unchecked the demands of the Bombay Dockyard continued to be pressing In response to this situation the Madras Government instructed Admiral Malcolm and Captain Harris to prepare a report on the condition of the teak forests in Malabar in 1838 Their report informed that that most of the accessible teak forests were already destroyed They recommended the government to appoint an officer in Malabar to regulate the exploitation of teak timber by private agencies[22] This attests the fact that due to over exploitation of teak forests, mainly for the Bombay Dockyard resulted in wood crisis

In 1839 Mr Williams the Controller of the Bombay Dockyard sent a letter to the Bombay Government regarding the difficulties in teak timber procurements He submitted two reports on the nature of teak timber trade and the kind of demand that existed for teak wood Mr Underwood the Collector of Malabar also submitted a lengthy report to the Madras Government where he recommended some measures such as the revival of the post of Conservator with abridged powers and Collector as an ex-officio Conservator He advocated that the government should protect the young teak trees by imposing restriction on teak fellings

At practical level the decrease of teak timber supply from Malabar and Canara districts made the Company Government to search for other source of teak wood The Anamalai forests of Coimbatore district with its virgin teak belt became an immediate

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[21] *Ibid*
[22] *Ibid* pp 87-79

option H G Morgan's *South Indian Forestry* provides a detailed account of activities on teak plantation in the Anamalai forests He pointed out that the Anamalai forests delivered teak to the Bombay Dockyard [23]

Immediately the exploitation of teak timber was commenced in the Anamalai range The Working Plan of Mount Stuart Forest Range described that during the 1840s, considerable quantities of teak were extracted from the forests of not only the Anamalai but also from Malabar, Travancore, Cochin and Canara for the use of the Bombay Dockyard Major Cotton, a civil engineer of Coimbatore district was appointed as Superintendent of the Anamalai forests He submitted the reports in 1852, 1853 and 1854 and mentioned that abundant of teak trees are available He proposed conservation measures like girdling and trimming in the Anamalai forests [24] Thus, the early conservation measures of the Company Government aimed at the exploitation of teak wood

Thus, during the period from 1800 to 1850 the Company Government followed the policy of limited intervention in the forests of the Madras Presidency The forest exploitation activities were mainly confined to the teak forests There were no serious explorative and conservation operations undertaken by the government as they were very expensive and time consuming In 1840 the Court of Directors Council while reviewing the forest administration argued that there would be no advantage in purchasing more land than was actually required to make provision for teak wood [2] Thus at initial stage the

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H G Morgan *Forestry in South India Higgenbothams* Madras 1884 p 21

[4] M V Lovirie *Revised Working Plan for the Mount Stuart Forests South Nilambur Division* Government Press Madras 1919 p 34

F P Stebbing *The Forests of India* Vol I pp 80 87

forest policies in the Presidency confined to simple extraction of the teak wood that was required for shipbuilding and other necessaries of the government and its agencies

However by 1840s the over exploitation of teak forests resulted in shortage in availability of teak timber and compelled both the Bombay and Madras Governments to formulate some sort of conservation measures In 1846 the Bombay Government appointed Surgeon Alexander Gibson as the Conservator of Forests With his appointment forest conservation operations were immediately commenced in each and every district of the Bombay Presidency [26] Simultaneously the Madras Government also initiated the teak plantation activities in Malabar and Canara districts as part of conservation measures

The reason why both the Madras and Bombay governments were interested in conservation of teak was that a part from good domestic market teak wood also has considerable demand in international markets The teak wood was one of the important exporting items at that time

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[26] *Hundred Years of Indian Forestry* p 72

Teak Wood Exports from India in Tons

Year	Export in tones
1840	4,952
1841	6,399
1842	11,487
1843	10,528
1844	14,245
1845	13,360
1846	16,798
1847	11,250
1848	18,000

Source Report of the 21st Proceedings of the British Association for the Advancement of Science 1951 p 88

The above table shows that there was a steady increase in the teak wood exports and it had actually become one of the lucrative export items for the East India Company Naturally the government attempted to control the trade in teak timber One consequence however was that the teak exports coupled with the Bombay Dockyard's heavy teak requirements and resulted in denudation of most of the accessible teak forests in Bombay and Madras presidencies

COLONIAL STATE AND EARLY FOREST CONSERVATION MEASURES

The early conservation measures in the Madras Presidency were mainly confined to conservation of the teak plantations in the West Coast The reason perhaps was that there was a pressing demand from various government departments like the Bombay Dockyard

the Pubic Works and the Telegraph departments Teak plantations were commenced wherever a favorable atmosphere was found for teak growth H Morgan showed that to meet demand from various departments the Madras Government initiated works on the conservation of teak plantations Teak conservation operations were perused with energy at the rate of one thousand acres a year in the Madras Presidency [27] The intensity of the works such that the Conservator of Forests who reported that teak wood has received the special attention of the Forest department and two third of his time was occupied with this work [28]

After the 1840s the conservation measures were initiated in the form of the teak plantations in some of the districts situated in the Western Coast Mr Conolly the Collector of Malabar reported the Madras Government that most of the mature teak trees were indiscriminately felled by local and European merchants for market Mr Conolly in fact had taken personal interest in planting teak trees and prohibited the felling of pre mature teak trees He advocated that the government should initiate the new teak plantations and also to replace those which have vanished by the private contractors reckless felling His interest had resulted in the foundation of wonderful teak plantation called the Nilambur plantations From 1843 to 1860 Mr Chatoo Menon a local official had taken care of this plantation More than a million teak plants were grown on 1200 acres of land Mr Ferguson a professional forester also extended his services and attempted to improve these plantations [29] Dr Cleghorn the Conservator of Forests visited these plantations and reported that they were in flourishing conditions Thus plantation

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[27] H C Morgan *Forestry in South India* p 4

[28] H Cleghorn *Forests and Gardens of South India* W H Allen London 1861 p 6
R S Brown *Revised Working Plan for Nilambur Valley* Government Press Madras 1929 pp 59 60 C A Innes *Madras District Gazetteer Malabar and Anjengo* p 245 H Morgan *Forestry in South India* p 9

[29] H Cleghorn *Forests and Gardens of South India* pp 10 11 and 29

activities under the supervision of the government became prominent in most of the Western Coast districts. The success story of the Nilambur plantations inspired the plantation activities in the Madras Presidency

Another important area where the early forest conservation measures were introduced was the Canara District. Mr Blair, the District Collector, issued a proclamation in 1843 and reserved five valuable timber trees of teak, pun, black wood, jack and sandal in the government forests. He strictly implemented the restrictions on the felling of these five species. The recommendations by the Collector on conservation were accepted by the Board of Revenue, which intern empowered the Collector to formulate forest conservation rules in his district.[31] Thus, reservation of certain valuable trees for the purpose of state requirements was commenced in the Canara district, which in the course of time, resulted in reservation of large blocks of forests as state forests. The important fact here is that in the absence of any organized forest establishment, the District Collectors had taken keen interest in initiating forest conservation measures

The Anamalai forest region of Coimbatore district was also brought under the early conservation measures. In 1848, Captain J. Michel of the Madras Native Infantry was deputed for eight months to investigate the condition of the teak forests in this region. Eventually Captain Michel was appointed as the Superintendent of the Anamalai forests to supervise conservation and meet the demand for teak wood from the Bombay Dockyard. Unfortunately, no conservation measures were seriously implemented beyond the

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[3] E P Stebbing, *The Forests of India*, Vol II, John Lane and Bodley Head Limited, London, 1927, p 222. Letter from the Canara District Collector, 5[th] October 1846 to the Secretary to the Board of Revenue (hereafter BOR) in BORP 21[st] March 1871, No 1222, p 1977

prevention of theft in these forests [32] The Forest department s operations were mainly confined to exploitation of teak forests During 1862-63, though the Indian Navy ceased its ship repairing activities in Bombay the teak logging operations in the Anamalai forests were continued and considerable quantities of teak planks were sent to Bombay as late as 1867 [33]

Simultaneously the Eastern Ghats where some of the districts of the Andhra region located have also undergone the process of deforestation particularly teak trees were exploited for shipbuilding The Godavary forests were known for valuable teak forests attracted the attention of the Company In 1775 a Committee of Circuit was appointed by the Court of Directors to enquire into the conditions of the Northern Circars This committee referred to the flourishing teak wood trade in the Andhra region In 1800s large quantity of teak wood was exported to the Bombay market [34] As in the West Cost the Company intervention in forests of the Eastern Cost was driven by the teak wood requirements for shipbuilding The ships having the capacity of 500 tones and above were built in the ports of Coringa and Naraspur During the early parts of 19th century the practice of shipbuilding providing 50 000 tonnage annually was an important maritime trade in the Northern Circars Besides this the Cocanada and Ingeram ports were known as flourishing centers for teak trade [35] It is reported that annually three thousand logs of teak wood was felled and brought for sale from the forests in Godavary region [36] But as in the

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L P Stebbing *The Forests of India* Vol II pp 223 24

M V Laurie *Revised Working Plan for the Mount Stuart Forests* p 36

R B Corwell *Working Plan for the Godavari Lower Division* 1934 1944 Government Press Madras 1937 p 27 F R Hemingway *Madras District Gazetteers Godavari* Madras Government Press Madras 1907 p 92

A V Raman Rao *Economic Development of Andhra Pradesh 1766 1957* Popular Book Depot Bombay 1958 pp 116 117

Ibid p 139

West Coast, the Company Government had not shown much interest due to lack of proper transportation, immediate market and absence of suitable atmosphere for teak plantations But the noticeable thing here is that the Andhra region also undergone the process of deforestation to cater the shipbuilding requirements of the colonial state

The Nallamalai forests were dense and known for valuable timber trees The Company Government attempted to grow teak plantations in the Nallamalai forests in Kurnool district, but met with adverse results Due to this failure much attention was focused on the Western Coast districts for teak wood requirements [37] In 1852, Captain Rundal extensively toured in the Nallamalai forests and reported that the indiscriminate exploitation of forests done by fuel wood contactors [38] In 1856 the Conservator of Forests Dr Cleghorn toured in the forests of Cuddapah district and recommended for their protection from illegal cuttings [39] But until advent of the railways the Company Government was not interested in these forests

Thus, before 1860, the forest policies were formulated to explore, conserve and exploit the teak and other valuable trees in the Madras Presidency During this period, commenting on the policy of the Madras Government, E P Stebbing wrote that

> The system of working the forests was gradually passing over from the hand hand-to-mouth policy pursued during half a century This policy had as its primary objects of the satisfying or attempt to

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Andhra Pradesh Government *100 Years of Scientific Forestry in Andhra Pradesh* Government Press Hyderabad 1961 p 6

[8] *Andhra Pradesh District Gazetteers A Manual of the Kurnool District* 1992 (Originally Published in 1886) Government Press Hyderabad 1992 p 131 A Faujdar Management *Working Plan for the Forests of Kurnool Nandyal and Atmokur Forest Division* 1991 2005 Vol I Government Press Hyderabad 1993 p 186

V S Krishnaswamy *Working Plan for the North Cuddapah Forest Division* (1936 46) Government Press Madras 1937 p 21 *Andhra Pradesh District Gazetteers A Manual of the Cuddapah District* Government Press Hyderabad 1992 (Originally Published in 1875) p 93

satisfy, the complaints and demands of the lessees of the forests and those who claims to private ownership had been assumed without enquiry to be legally sound These persons owing to the mistaken policy introduced in the early days for securing the requirements of timber by the government departments, had been allowed to obtain a definite hold over large areas of forest The secondary object was to assure to government the provision of its full timber demands for the dockyards, gun-carriage factories and the public works and so forth [40]

Thus the forest conservation policies during this time were mainly confined to the teak forests conservation and provision of wood to different government departments at cheaper rates However, the significant development as for the Forest department concerned was that the Madras Government recognized the importance of the forest conservation under a separate department so that exploitation of forest resources would go along simultaneous conservation activities

The ever increasing demand for timber and other forest products therefore convinced the Madras Government to initiate a separate administrative branch for the management of forests Commenting on the establishment of the Forest department in Madras, E P Stebbing mentioned that " Probably the chief reason which finally induced the Madras Government to appoint their own Conservator of Forests was the alarming decrease which had became apparent in the supplies of first class teak in the old Malabar forests for which is had practically all been cut out during the proceeding half century [41] The demand for teak and other valuable woods from the East India Company Government had resulted in the inception of some constructive attempts to manage forest resources In August 1856 Dr Cleghorn, a Surgeon General, submitted a report to the Madras Government, which

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[40] E P Stebbing, *The Forests of India*, Vol 1, pp 219 20
[41] *Ibid* p 222

containing the proposals for the establishment of the Forest department These proposals were forwarded to the Government of India for sanction which was accorded in November 1856 On the 19th December 1856 Dr Cleghorn was appointed as the Conservator of Forests in the Madras Presidency [4]

It was a major land mark in the history of forest administration in the Madras Presidency It initiated the establishment headed by the Conservator with assisting staff for the management of the forests in the Presidency It also initiated a shift in the forest policy as argued by MacLean The important steep in forest conservancy was in prohibiting not only for the felling and extraction of timber but also for the protection and reproduction of the forest growth had then became apparent with the appointment of Conservator of forests [4] Another important conservation measure undertaken during this period was the creation of the Jungle Conservancy Fund in 1859 under the supervision the Revenue department Its main object was to conserve and extend the village jungles in Madras. Subsequently, it was brought into operation in all the districts in the Presidency [44] This dual organizational setup existed for about twenty years In 1882 after passing the Madras Forest Act of 1882 these two establishments were amalgamated in the Forest department which intern had become the branch of the Revenue department It was the existence of these duel organizations that had resulted in the evolution of two different discourses one by the Revenue and the other by the Forest department s officials on forest policies Both the departments in a way competed for controlling the forest resources

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[3] P Stabbing *The Forests of India* Vol I p 297

[4] C D MacLean *Manual of the Administration of the Madras Presidency* Vol II Asian Educational Service Delhi 1985 p 315 (originally published by the Government Press Madras 1885)

[44] *Ibid*

The annual administrative reports prepared by Dr Cleghorn the Conservator of Forests not only attests the ever lasting demand for teak wood but also demonstrates the changing nature of the demand for wood after the introduction of railways In the first annual administrative report prepared by the Conservator of Forests in 1857 he mentioned that the Forest department's operations were mainly confined to the Western Cost districts His report described the timber exploitation operations in the teak forests of the Anamalai Wynaad and Gund plantations in North Canara and the Conolly teak plantations in Nilambur Apart from these plantations, he also describes the sandal wood tracts in Mysore Canara Coimbatore, Salem and North Arcot districts In the 1858 report he described that the demand from the Indian Marine department was not heavy but Railways Telegraph and Public Work Departments were pressing [4] Thus up to 1850s the forest policies in the Madras Presidency were mainly confined to the exploitation of the teak and partial conservation of the teak plantations During this period the forest policies did not intervene much in the day-to-day lives of people and confined to the uninhibited forest tracts of the Western and some parts of the Eastern Coasts After 1850, the forest policies took a drastic turn mainly due to the introduction of the railway network and its heavy demand for forest products

RAILWAYS AND FORESTS

Introduction of the railways in India in the mid 1850s created a massive demand for timber and compelled the colonial state to formulate strategies to exploit the forest resources in India in a sustained form The commencement of the railway network in

[4] Government Order (hereafter G O) No 6505 27th October 1890 Mis This G O was issued by the Madras Government and requested the Revenue department to give details on the brief history of the Forest department in the Madras Presidency in BORP 17th February 1891 No 120 Revenue p 3

various parts of the British India resulted in two simultaneous processes one it lead to wanton destruction of forests and second, in order to have continuous supply of wood for railway network the British Government embarked upon forest conservations measures in the form of fuel reserves and plantations Ramachandra Guha argued that the Indian Forest department was established in order to provide the wood requirements to the railway network systems that were introduced in the 1850s [46]

> Regarding the changes brought about by the introduction of the railways in the Indian forest landscape Colonial Pearson wrote that ' As soon as mutiny was suppressed, the railways were taken in hand and the timber merchants and sleeper contractors raided the forests for timber felling trees wherever they liked It was only necessary for contractors weather European or Indian to obtain *Parwana* orders from authorities to cut timber for him to set work in that context formation of the Forest department was happened [47]

The railway transport system in the Madras Presidency was introduced in the mid 1850s and mainly belonged to two systems one, the Madras Railway Company and two the South Indian Railway Company [48] These two companies maintained the railway operation in the Madras Presidency The important question here is that how the introduction of railways did affect the forest landscape of the Presidency

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Ramachandra Guha Forestry in British and Post British India A Historical Analysis *Economic and Political Weekly* Vol 18 No 44 &46 October November 1985 pp 1882 1896 and 1940 1946 Velayutham Saravanan Commercialization of Forest Environmental Negligence and Alienation of Tribal Rights in the Madras Presidency 1792 1882 *Indian Economic and Social History Review* Vol 35 No 2 1998 pp 125 146 Commercial Crops Alienation of Common Property Resources and Change in Tribal Economy in the Shervaroy Hill of Madras Presidency During the Colonial Period *Review of Development and Change* Vol No 2 July December 1999 pp 298-317

[47] G F Pearson Recollection of the Early Days of the India Forest Department 1858 1864 *Indian Forester* Vol XXIX No 8 August 1903 p 312

[48] Nicholson W Francis *Gazetteer of South India* Vol I Reprinted Edition Mittal Publications Delhi 1988 p 75

The expansion of the railway network appropriated the forest resources in Madras in two ways: one, it consumed enormous quantum of durable and valuable wood for sleepers used in the construction of the railway track and two, it consumed massive quantities of wood as engine fuel. Thus on account of the railway expansion unprecedented exploitation of forest resources had taken place in the Madras Presidency. In 1859 Dr. Cleghorn, the Conservator of Forests described the nature of the impact that "there were many causes at work which are gradually thinning the racks of our indigenous forests of the Madras Presidency the first and by far the most formidable of these being railway requirements. It is scarcely credible the many thousands of large forest trees which have been felled in the neighborhood of the various line of railway within the past few years."[49] He was of the opinion that the requirements of the Indian Navy were not as large as in previous years, but the requirements of the different railway companies were much grater. It was in this context that the Madras Forest department came into existence mainly to meet the ever increasing wood requirements of the railways.

The wood necessaries of the railways had exercised significant influence on the Madras Government forest policies. The construction of railway track required massive quantities of the durable timber and this resulted in unprecedented exploitation of accessible forest tracts in the Madras Presidency. Dr. Cleghorn, the Conservator of Forests, estimated that each mile of the railway track required 1760 sleepers, measuring three cubic feet of wood, which would last effectively for 8 years. In addition to this, for maintenance of railway tracks required at least 220 sleepers for each mile or 22,000 sleepers for every

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[49] Cited in Edward Balfour's, *The influence Exercised by Trees on the Climate and Productiveness of the Peninsula of India*, Government Press, Madras, 1878, p.9.

hundred miles [50] He suggested that to meet this demand, government should undertake the massive plantation operations in the Madras Presidency

E P Stebbing showed similar kind of demand on wood supply, when the expansion of the railway tracks was taken up in the Madras Presidency He estimated that the railway track construction required 20,000 tons of wood for every fifty miles [51] Thus from 1800 to1850 the forest conservation measures were mainly aimed at providing teak wood to the Bombay Dockyard and after 1850, it was by the railways The requirements of the railway companies were massive and much greater than the demand from shipbuilding This unsaturated demand for wood resulted in massive deforestation of the accessible forests in the Madras Presidency

As the railway network went on increasing in the Madras Presidency, more forests destruction was taken place Along with the expansion of the railways certain conservation measures were also introduced in the districts through which the railway track goes through The history of forestry during the 1850 and 1860s need to be explored further In the annual administrative report of 1859-60, the Conservator of Forests reported that the requirements of the railway sleepers was so pressing that in addition to woods from the ordinary forests the sal wood was brought from Ganjam district and *jarrah (Eucalyptus rostrata)* from Australia [52] Such was the nature of demand existed for wood from the railway companies Apart from the construction of tracks the railway companies also consumed large quantity of wood as fuel in rail enjoins It was these massive wood requirements of the railway companies that necessitated the Madras Government to

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H Cleghorn *Forests and Gardens of South India* p 31

E P Stebbing *The Forests of India* Vol I p 314

Proceedings of the Madras Government in BORP 17th February 1891 Revenue No 120 p 3

undertake some kind of conservation measures in order to have continuous wood supply to the railway companies in the Madras Presidency

Fuel Wood Consumption Pattern by the Railway Companies in Madras Presidency in tons

Items	Madras Railways		Great Southern of India Railway		Conjeveram Railways		Total	
	1867	1868	1867	1868	1867	1868	1867	1868
Coke	1 488	1,909	23	32	---	---	1,511	1 941
Coal	5,191	3,584	3 513	2 791	167	43	8 871	6 418
Patent	364	3 259	---	462		1	364	3 722
Fuel wood	49 235	48 068	1 923	5 923	14	367	51 172	54 358

Source I P Stebbing The Forests of India Vol II p 103

The above table shows the fuel wood utilization pattern of the railway companies in the Madras Presidency The noticeable fact is that the railway network expansion had taken place in South-India in the absence of adequate quantity of coal mines The above mentioned table shows that the coal consumption as fuel was insignificant perhaps because of the wood as fuel substituted for coal This demonstrates that the quantum of exploitation of forest resources that has taken in the Madras Presidency in the context of expansion of the railways

It was these wood requirements of the railways that compelled the Madras Government to formulate forest polices though it was not a simple process There was a rigorous debate that took place within the colonial bureaucracy on the role of the state in providing the wood requirements to the railway companies The questions that surfaced at that time were How to meet the wood requirements of the railway companies? What is the role of the government in

doing? And should it be private enterprise, or the government supposes to meet the wood demands of railway companies? These questions became persistent at that time when the Madras Government attempted to formulate viable policies for the management of forests

It would be interesting to see how these questions were debated by the colonial bureaucracy. In 1860, a dispatch from the British Secretary of State for India was sent to the Indian Government regarding the role of the state in providing wood requirements for the railway. He felt that the private agencies could not be relied on in providing wood and fuel requirements of the railway companies and that the government should take the responsibility. This dispatch was distributed to all provinces including Madras. This dispatch was circulated by the Madras Government to the Collectors of those districts through which the railway track goes through. Most of them recommended that the government should undertake careful conservation of fire-wood plantation, but with a note of caution that reservation of forest tracts may lead to unnecessary tension between the government and the people who depended on forests for livelihood.[53] Thus, there emerged the question of local communities' rights and privileges which were mainly articulated by the Revenue department's officials on behalf of people. Mr. Campbell Walker, the Inspector of Forests, responding to this question wrote that: "Private enterprise in India is not likely to in such an understanding which is found even in Europe that state alone can look sufficiently a head and commend sufficient capital for such operations."[54] He was of the opinion that state should invest money in plantations, which are meant for providing fuel wood for the railways.

Dispatch from the Secretary of State for India, 9th May 1860, No. 15, in BORP, 11th March 1861, No. 1491.
BORP, 1st March 1875, No. 480, F. No. 25, p. 1273.

Thus the Forest department was given the task of conservation of plantations for fuel wood It was mainly due to the fact that in South-India, the railway expansion had taken place in the absence of coal mines the railway companies' utilized large quantity of wood as fuel It was this demand for wood that resulted in massive destruction of all accessible forests Thus there was a pressing imperative surfaced before the Government of Madras to undertake the fuel wood plantations

Local officials also advocated for policy interventions in initiating and managing plantations to meet the wood demands of the railways The Salem District Collector felt that private enterprise could not be relied upon in providing fuel wood to the railways He reported that on the forest establishment in Salem district able to supply only 1300 tons of wood per annum while the railway companies likely to increase their fire-wood demand to 3000 tons per annum He suggested that the government should reserve large forest tracts and conserve them carefully Taking note of the forest destruction due to introduction of railways he warned that if it continues within a short span of time the entire woodlands in the vicinity of railway tracks would disappear He suggested that the government must press upon the railway authorities to use coal instead of wood [55]

The Coimbatore District Collector put forward similar opinion on the role of government in meeting the wood requirements of the railway companies He argued that the private enterprise cannot be trusted in providing continuous fuel wood supply to the railways He argued that due to heavy consumption of wood by the railways availability of fire wood to people became a problem He suggested that the government should plant fast growing

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Letter from the Collector of Salem District to the Secretary to the BOR in BORP 14 August 1866 No 5667 pp 5215 47

trees to meet the demand from the railways.[56] The Bellary District Collector felt that provision of fuel wood for the railway companies is difficult task for the government. He suggested that villagers should be encouraged to plant trees like babul and other quick growing trees on tank beds and waste lands.[57] The Trichinopoly District Collector was of the opinion that the private enterprise may not provide wood requirements for the railway companies. The reason he has shown was that the natives always look for quick returns hence may not show interest on the fuel plantations that require long gestation period. He suggested that the government should conserve the existing forests with strict regulations.[58] Thus, most of the revenue officials were convinced that the fuel requirements of the railways should be provided by the government. In practical terms, the Railway companies however continued to get supply from both private and government sources. The government, on its part came up with the establishments for the management of forests in the districts where the railway companies had continued to demand for wood

The indiscriminate distraction of accessible forests for the railways resulted in massive destruction of forests and continuous supply of wood for the railways had became cause for concern. The North Arcot District Collector reported that most of the valuable trees were indiscriminately felled by the railway fuel contractors and all the forests near the railway lines were destroyed. He reported that since there were no strict restrictions on exploitation of trees, all trees including very young ones were also felled. This situation was similar

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[56] Letter from the Collector of Coimbatore District to the Secretary to BOR, in BORP, 15th August 1866, No. 5709, pp. 5245-47.

[57] Letter from the Collector of Bellary District to the Secretary to BOR, in BORP, 21st August 1866, No. 5949, pp. 5245-47.

[58] Letter from the Collector of Trichinopoly to the Secretary to BOR, in BORP, 20th August 1866, No. 5895, pp. 5369-70.

condition in most of the districts through which the railway track runs in the Presidency [59] The alarm bells both from the forest and revenue officials made the Madras Government recognize the importance of the administrative establishments for the management of the forests in those districts through which the railway track have gone

By the 1860s, small administrative establishments for the management of forests were initiated in various districts For instance the forest conservancy in the Salem district was commenced with the advent of the Madras railways In 1859-60 the amount of *seigniorage* collected on sleepers in this district was nearly Rs 23,500, and the number of sleepers utilized in the construction of the railway track were 2 45 743 The demand was so great that the mature tree could not be marked and even the young trees were indiscriminately felled However in order to regulate this destruction an administrative establishment for the management of forests in the Salem district was instituted in 1860-61 [60]

In the South Arcot district a forest establishment was started in 1861-62, with the sole object of providing continuous supply of fuel wood for the railways For this purpose five blocks in the Gingee hills and the slopes of the Kalarayans were selected and strict regulations were placed on peoples access to those forests [61] In the Madura district a forest organization was commenced in 1860 and in the subsequent years most of the accessible forest tracts were brought under the supervision of this forest establishment [62] Captain Rundall who explored the *Nallamala* forests in 1852 advocated for necessary of administrative establishment for the management of those forests And in 1862 the

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59 BORP 13 July 1871 No 2912
60 F J Richard *Madras District Gazetteers Salem District* Vol I Madras 1918 p 248
61 W Francis *Madras District Gazetteers South Arcot* 1906 Madras pp 147-48
62 W Francis *Madras District Gazetteers Madura* Vol I 1906 pp 133-34

government ordered that all the important *Nallamala* forests should be brought under the supervision of the Forest department[63] In the Cuddapah district a small forest establishment was started in1860 and in 1861 licenses were issued for cutting of 10 000 sleepers in the jungles between Yerraguntlakota and Balapalle[64]

In the Tinnevelly district the forest tracts were brought under the conservancy rules A small forest establishment was started and kept under the charge of a *Duftdar* and two peons They were made to work under the supervision of the Sub-Collector In 1860 the District Collector, Mr Puckle advised that the only remedy for the destruction of forests was to place them under the charge of a special administrative establishment His proposal was accepted and Captain Fullerton was appointed as a special officer to organize the forest administration in both Madura and Tinnevelly districts[65]

Mr Parker the District Collector of Madura reported the government on the value of wood growth in the Kambum valley in 1856 His proposals were accepted by the government and orders were issued to prohibit the unauthorized fellings in the forests In 1858 the government made the first attempt at conserving the existing forests and ordered the prohibition of illegal fellings by people In 1857 R H Beddome the Deputy Conservator of Forests visited the Palani hills and reported on the rapid destruction of forests in the area To handle this situation in 1860 one forest overseer was posted to the valley[66]

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[63] *Andhra Pradesh District Gazetteers Manual of Kurnool District* (first published in 1886 Madras) Reprinted Edition Hyderabad 1992 p 131

[64] V S Krishnaswamy *Working Plan for the Cuddapah South Forest Division* Government Press Madras 1937 p 28

[65] *Madras District Gazetteers Tinnevelly District* Part II pp 196 97

[66] W Francis *Madras District Gazetteer Madura District* II p 132

In Nilgiris district, by 1852, a conservancy establishment with a forester and six peons was sanctioned Mr Thomas, a great lover of trees was the Collector of Coimbatore (in which Nilgiris was included once) and it was mainly due to his efforts that the destruction of forests was controlled In 1860 some rules for the protection of forests were promulgated The Madras Government ordered that the whole of the woodlands around the Oocatmund should be reserved, and no wood cutters be allowed inside them The vacant places in those reserved areas shall be brought under plantation [67] In order to meet the demand of wood exotic trees from Australian were brought and planted in many parts of Nilgiri district Thus the massive wood demand created by the railway companies compelled the colonial state to formulate interventionist policy in the management of forests in the Presidency

In spite of conservation measures, destruction of forests became a common feature in most of the districts The railway contractors were given free hand in dealing with procurement of wood This situation made the Madras Government to realize the possible shortage of wood supply to the railways and other government departments In order to meet this crisis that may arise in future, the Madras Government started fuel plantations under the supervision of the Forest department Simultaneously, private entrepreneurs were also encouraged to undertake fuel wood cultivation

Thus the massive distraction of forests on the one hand, and the increase in the railway requirements on the other, compelled the Madras Government to undertake some urgent conservation measures The Madras Government issued an order on 10th July 1866 and instructed the Collectors of Cuddapah, North Arcot and Coimbatore districts to reserve

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[67] W Francis *Madras District Gazetteer Nilgiris* Vol I 1907 Madras p 210

certain tracts of waste lands for fuel wood plantations [68] Another government order was issued in January 1867, directing Collectors to extend the plantation activities in their respective districts [69] It shows how the government responded to the timber demands of the railway companies By 1879, the expansion of the railway tracts as the follows

Railway Track Expansion in Madras Presidency by 1879

Madras Railways	
Route Name	**Distance in Miles**
South-West line	409
Bangalore railway line	85
Nilgiri Branch	26
North-west railway line	308
Bellary Branch	32
Total running mils	**857**
South India Railway	**644**
Total number of miles	**1521**

Source Board of Revenue Proceedings, 8th April 1879, No 919, p 3172

If the statistics pertaining to the sleepers utilization pattern mentioned by Dr Cleghorn the Conservator of Forests are to be believed by 1879 railways network expansion consumed 26,00000 sleepers and for annual maintenance of the railway tracks 330000 tones of sleepers were used in every year Such was the kind of forest resource exploitation that took place in the Madras Presidency due to the introduction and expansion of railways If E P Stebbing estimation is to be believed that by 1879, the railway companies consumed about 6000000 tons of wood for the railway track construction alone The quantity of the fire-wood

[8] Proceedings of Madras Government in BORP 11 March 1867 No 1491 p 1262
BORP 12th December 1876 p 1094

supplied to the railways from the government forests and the revenue realized from them in the Cuddapah district was as follows

The Fuel Wood Supply from the Cuddapah District Forests to Railway Companies

Year	Tons	R S
1870-71	7 816	17 509
1871-72	10 214	22 881
1872-73	16 491	36 940
1873-74	17 430	3 943
1874-75	12 838	28 758
1875-76	12 683	28 441
1876-77	16 000	33 330
1877 78	22,000	50 117
1878-79	12 000	27 906
1879-80	5 000	12 000
1880 81	7 000	16 000
1881 82	11 000	26 000

Source V S Krishnaswamy, Working Plan for the Cuddapah South Forest Division, Government Press Madras 1937 p 28

The above table shows that wood supply went on incasing year by year but after the 1880 the revenue on fire-wood came down gradually mainly due to the fact that the Madras Government realized the scarcity of the wood and encouraged the railway companies to use the coal imported from Britain as well as from the other parts of India

CONFLICTING APPROACHES TO LOGGING REVENUE AND FOREST DEPARTMENTS

The expansion of the Forest department s operations in the form of fuel reserves and plantations resulted in reservation of forest tracts and waste lands and scientific management under its direct supervision At the same time the Forest department also attempted to expand its control on the jungles and waste lands which were kept at that time under the control of Jungle Conservancy Rules executed under the supervision of the Revenue

department This attempt resulted in the conflict between the Revenue and Forest departments The correspondence that took place between the officials of Revenue and Forest departments in a way demonstrates the hostile relation between the two departments

The Conservator of Forests, in his correspondence to the Collector of Salem District instructed that the lands with tree growth should not be given for cultivation without consulting the Forest department The Salem District Collector opposed the Conservator s instruction and responded that the Forest department should confine to the conservation of forests and jungle lands and should not interfere in the waste land management under the supervision of the Revenue department [70] It was this type of interference of the Forest department in the management of waste lands that turned out to be the main point of conflict between the Forest and Revenue departments

The Cuddapah District Collector's correspondence to the Board of Revenue reflects the hostile relation between the Forest and Revenue departments He reported that in the Cuddapah district, the Forest department wanted to reserve 1,433 acres of waste lands for the purpose plantation He criticized this attempt and argued that the Forest department wishes to take exclusive possession of all the waste lands without paying the fixed assessment He argued I cannot see why forests should be favored at the expense of land revenue Any day the land revenue might be increased by someone taking up this waste and paying the assessment The accounts of the Forest department were absolutely delusive if it is permitted to rob other department s profitable assets which being debited with the legitimate

[0] Letter from the Collector of the Salem District to the BOR in BORP 2 [1] March 1868 No 1479 p 1413

charges" [71] Thus, he opposed the expansion of Forest department s operations with the argument that forest conservation need not be given priority over the land revenue

In order to oppose the expansion of the Forest department some of the District Collectors attempted to create obstacles to the forest reservation The Cuddapah District Collector reported that the neighbouring people of the proposed reserves have raised strong objections for their exclusion from the forest tract in which they have exercised rights and privileges He was of the opinion that the Forest department wanted the land without giving proper compensation to the villagers Thus, the expansion of the Forest department's operation especially when it attempted to reserve the lands for plantation brought about a serious conflict between the Forest and Revenue departments The main reason for this conflict was that while the Forest department wanted waste lands without assessment for its operations, the revenue authorities opposed its expansion mainly because of the fact that the granting of the waste lands to people on *pattas* was considered to be exclusive business of the revenue authorities Within this context of power struggle we have to understand the Madras officials' articulation on the communal rights and privileges of the people over forests in the Presidency

R H Beddome the Conservator of Forests also accepted the argument that reservation of forests and waste lands as the government reserves had adverse impact on the neighboring people and their customary rights He described that " Railroads are utterly altering the features of the country and privileges hitherto in existence must disappear before them The demand for timber and fuel in all districts transverse by the railways is already so far beyond what can be looked upon as the permanent supply that is becoming an imperative duty on the

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[71] Letter from the Collector of Cuddapah District to BOR No 71 in BORP 23 d May 1870

part of government clearly define all rights and introduce strict conservancy for the future prosperity of the country demand" [72] Thus, at one level, despite conflicting interests that the both revenue and forest officials became aware of the effect of the forest reservation on people's rights and privileges over forests But at other level, the revenue official continued to oppose the forest reservation In 1875, the Collector of North Arcot district was instructed to reserve forest tracts for fuel plantation He replied spelling out the difficulties in selecting the sites for plantation to the Board of Revenue on the following lines

> I am now compelled to go so far field as fifteen miles from the line of rail shows clearly the great difficulty experienced in finding land to which villagers cannot put forward claims of account of communal rights based on the ancient privileges of grazing conceded by former governments in bye-gone days These claims will, I am well aware be argued by villagers whose cattle have been accustomed to wander and graze in the Yerkambat jungle and if those claims are considered so strong as to invalidate the rights of Government to make use of Amboore jungle for fuel reserves, I really do not see how we can resist incidentally similar objections in the case of the Yarlambat lands The *ryots* throughout the district are by this time perfectly aware of the success that has hitherto attended the claims of the few villagers whose cattle are alleged to have ranged in the Amboor jungles and they are all prepared to make the same resistance when other lands elsewhere are selected for reserves [73]

The above correspondence describes the attitude and argument put forward by the revenue officials on the issue of forest conservation The opposition from the local people was effectively used to check the expansion of jurisdiction of the Forest department by the revenue officials Reservation in some areas in the Ambore taluq in Cuddapah district was abandoned due to the resistance of villagers and similar claims were put forward by the villagers in the Yarlambat reserves The North Arcot Collector reported that he could not

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BORP 4[d] June 1870 No 3805 p 4566

Collector of North Arcot to the Secretary to the BOR in BORP 3[d] August 1875 p 6394

reserve the lands for plantation purpose due to the resistance from people Whatever might have been the real case, but the Collectors constantly seem to have magnified the claims and privileges of people That some officials of Revenue department seemed to have used the community rights as a weapon to counter the Forest department's expansion into what they considered the potential revenue areas

Thus from 1860 to 1880, the railway network expanded rapidly and consumed enormous amount of wood in the Madras Presidency Though substantial wood supply was drawn from private sources, the Forest department continued to be the major supplier of fuel wood to the railways In order to provide the wood for the railway companies, the government began to reserve forest and waste lands as fuel reserves

The total area of fuel reserves in 1869-70 was 41,479 acres or 64 8 square miles and these areas increased by 1877-78 to 127,059 acres or 196 squire miles [74] Within the span of ten years, there was an increase of 200% area under the control of the Forest department

Area Controlled by the Forest Department for Plantations

Total area of fuel reserves	123 625
Do plantations	3,434
Total	127 059

Source Board of Revenue Proceedings, 8th April 1879, B No 919 p 3171

The above statistics shows that by 1878, considerable extent of the land neighboring the railway tracks was brought under the fuel reserves managed by the Forest department

[74] Letter from the Conservator of Forests to the Secretary to BOR in BORP 8th April 1879 No 919 p 3171

Despite the Revenue department's resistance, the government sanctioned the land as fuel reserves to the Forest department. However, despite the government effort to increase the fuel wood from the government forests the overall supply continued to be inadequate. Thus by 1882, the supply private source became predominant and the following table shows the quantum of wood supplied to the railways by various agencies.

Fuel wood Supply from Different Sources. (in tons)

Dominions	Governmen	Private	Total
1 Nizam		2 500	2,500
2 Bellary		1,120	1,120
3 Cuddapah	8860	1 800	10 660
4 North Arco	2,750	23 410	26 190
5 Mysore		850	850
6 Salem	650	10,750	11 400
7 Coimbatore	400	15 250	400
Total			15,250
	12,600	55,760	68,420

Source D Brandis, Suggestions Regarding the Forest Administration in Madras Presidency, 1883, Madras, p 40

The above table shows that the fuel wood supply from the government forests was very much less in comparison with supply from private and other agencies. The Agent of the Madras railway estimated that they required at least 91,000 tons of fuel wood annually for their consumption. Dr D Brandis advocated that the Madras Government must increase its supply to the railways in future. He felt that the private entrepreneurs could not be trusted as they cannot supply the wood continuously. He advocated that the government should

conserve forests to meet the demand by the railway companies [75] Regarding the increasing role of the government in providing fuel wood for the railways, Dr Brandis opined that in future, the Forest department should increase the fuel wood supply to 50,000 tons annually [76]

Thus the British commercial interests were mainly responsible for the initiation of early forest conservation measures Between the years, 1800 and 1860 the administrative establishments were created to exploit the teak wood and other forest resources systematically Along with the commercial imperatives, there developed an interesting discourse by the colonial officials in Madras on the importance of the existence of the forest cover in order to maintain the healthy climate, rainfall pattern and surface irrigation systems According to Richard Grove, this discourse was responsible for bringing forest conservation measures to India and other British colonies But the present study would argue that in the context of the Madras Presidency, the colonial officials discourse on deforestation and its impact on climate and irrigation were used for different purposes While the officials of the Forest department used this discourse for not only strengthening their institutional base, but also to expand their conservation operations the revenue officials used it to control the shifting cultivation practiced by the tribals However the same result has facilitated the government intervention into the management of forests

DESICCATIONIST DISCOURSE FOREST CONSERVATION

The term 'Desiccationist Discourse' was used by Richard Grove to describe the scientific observations of the colonial scientific community on the relation between the deforestation and its influence on the climate, rainfall and surface irrigation systems in various European

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D Brandis *Suggestions Regarding the Forest Administration in the Madras Presidency* Government Press Madras 1883 p 41

Ibid p 41

colonies.[77] Vasanat Saberwal on the other hand employed this term to analyse certain interconnected set of ideas centered on the connection between deforestation and its impact on the physical climate in the Himalayan region.[78] In the Madras Presidency, there are some official reflections on the deforestation and its effect on physical climate was existed. The present chapter analyses some of the official reflections on deforestation and its impact on the climate and surface irrigation systems.

The discourse by the forest officials on the relation between the deforestation and its influence on physical climate facilitated for the evolution of state forestry in India. It was the 17th and 18th centuries that gave birth to the desiccationist ideas and in fact many European countries witnessed some of the tremendous scientific discoveries in human and plant sciences. These discoveries contributed to the systematic development of the botanical knowledge and increased scientific enquiries into the tropical plants and their medicinal properties. At the same time, experiments were conducted on the influence of trees on the physical environment and surface irrigation systems. By the beginning of the 19th century, the relationship between the forest cover and its influence on physical environment was conceived and popularised by scientists and Botanists in some of the European countries, particularly in Germany, Britain and France. This scientific community popularized the idea that the forest cover is capable of influencing the eco-system functioning in the form of regulation of temperature, floods, soil erosion, and rainfall and maintains irrigation sources. Richard Grove claims the discourse by the colonial officials on the deforestation and its

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Richard H. Grove, *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens and the Origins of Environmentalism, 1600-1860*, Cambridge University Press, Indian reprint: Foundations Books, Delhi, 1995 and *Ecology, Climate and Empire: Indian Legacy in Global Environmental History*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1998.

Vasant K. Saberwal, *Pastoral Politics: Shepherds, Bureaucrats and Conservation in the Western Himalaya*, OUP, New Delhi, 1999, p.1.

negative effects on the climate was the main factor that had convinced the colonial state to formulate forest conservation measures in its colonies in Asia and Africa continents [79] But the preset chapter shows that the discourse on deforestation was used by the colonial state as a justifying factor for its intervention in the management of the forests in the Madras Presidency At another level, Richard Grove projects the desiccationist discourse as a monolithic process that had convinced that colonial state to formulate forest policies But the preset chapter shows that desiccationist discourse was not completely accepted within the colonial bureaucratic circle, especially by the revenue officials

In the Madras Presidency we have some reflections by officials on the relation between deforestation and its impact on physical climate The main substance of these narratives was that the deforestation on mountain sloops and river catchments areas might result in dangerous consequences like flooding diminishing of irrigation sources and decline of the agriculture productivity They claimed that most of the mountain forests were destroyed by the shifting cultivation practiced by tribals They therefore, advocated for the state intervention in controlling deforestation

For analysing the colonial officials' narratives on deforestation and its influence on climate and surface irrigation we have mainly depended on the report published by Surgeon General Edward Balfour in 1878 It had documented the literature pertaining to deforestation and its negative effect on physical climate during the years 1840 to 1878 [80] The exploitation carried out by the native and European timber merchants in the West Cost resulted in denudation of forest cover The negative of this denudation on surface drainage systems was

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Richard H Grove *Green Imperialism*

[80] Edward Balfour *Influence Exercised by Trees on the Climate and Productiveness of Peninsula of India* Government Press Madras 1878 p 6

narrated by some of the officials in the Madras Presidency The memorandum written by Balfour was published by the Madres Government It documented the literature pertaining to the negative effects of deforestation on irrigation and rainfall in 1840 It was circulated to the governments of Bombay Bengal and the Court of Directors Balfour in his memorandum argues that

> With the exception of few localities in South India the whole country seems destitute of trees Weather they have disappeared under the hands of man while non were being planted to supply their places or weather they never existed, nothing so much strikes the attention as their general scarcity, and I added, we cannot but look upon the cultivation of trees as of vital importance in such a county as India, where under a tropical sun, the atmosphere is so likely to be loaded with mismata, and the fertility of the land is so much dependent on the supply of water The facts than adduced seemed to justify the conclusion that the foliage of trees greatly influenced the purity humidity and temperature of the atmosphere and supply of water on the earth's surface, by attracting clouds and condensing the moisture in the atmosphere diminishing local temperature protecting the soil form the action of the sun s rays and husbanding the rain by regulation its flow [81]

In 1846 Surgeon Alexander Gibson the Conservator of Forests in Bombay Presidency argued that the destruction of forests had a negative effect on the fertility of the agricultural lands He described that to quote

> Since the South Konkan had been to a great extent denude of forest all the inhabitants concur in asserting that the springs had left the uplands that the climate had became greatly drier, the seasons more uncertain and the lands less fertile, and while in Canara that exuberant moisture of the sea air soon covers the denuded hill with a matted jungle of brushwood and small shrubs the different climate of the upper country does not admit of this effort for speedy reproduction The shoots from the felled trees remain green for a time and on these perishing or being cut away, the hills remain bare [82]

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[81] *Ibid* p 6

[82] *Ibid* p 5 A Gibson s' ideas on the relation between the forests and climate were mentioned in a correspondence published in *The Indian Forester* June 1886 Vol 6 p 251

Thus the forest officials warned through their narratives on the destruction of forests and its negative influence on physical climate By doing so they sought state intervention in protecting the forests

The deforestation debate acquired wider publicity in India as well as in England The Court of the Directors took cognizance of this issue and sent a dispatch in 1847 to the Government of India on the subject of the influence of trees on the climate and productivity of a country in some parts of India It observes that The decrease of moisture which has taken place in various parts of America has usually been attributed to the clearing of the forests and where the country, as has sometimes happened from political causes has returned partially to its original forest state the contrary effect had been observed As the removal of trees had been followed by great diminution of the volume of water in the rivers and lakes the restoration of wood was succeeded by a corresponding increase in the quantity of water [83] In a way the issue of deforestation and its negative effect on physical climate and irrigation sources acquired global publicity

The dispatch from the Court of Directors provoked a debate on deforestation and its influence on climate in the Madras Presidency During the years 1847 to 1850 several reports were dispatched by some of the District Collectors to the Board of Revenue on the deforestation in their respective districts These reports were individual reflections of the local officials on deforestation Writing in 1848 the Sub-Collector in Rajahmudary informed that due to destruction of forests the soil erosion became a regular feature in some parts of the Godavary district He argued that the destruction of forests on the mountain slopes which were birth place for springs might lead to severe damage to irrigation sources Mr Blane, the

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[8] F Balfour *Influence Exercised by Trees* p 5

Collector of Canara District, reported in 1848 to the Board of Revenue that due to the *Kumri* cultivation (local name to shifting cultivation), most of the valuable forests were destroyed He argued that indiscriminate clearance of forests might result in loss of fertility of soil and diminution of irrigation sources He therefore suggested that the government should declare forests as state property The Collectors of Trichinopoly and North Arcot reported that due to extensive clearance of forests the rainfall had diminished in some parts of their districts [84] These accounts testify the status of deforestation that was carried out in several parts of the Madras Presidency

In 1848, the Madras Government published a memorandum prepared by General Cullen who possessed considerable knowledge on the Indian botany It has been argued that the trees on mountain slopes attract and condense rainfall and denudation of trees might result in decrease of rainfall and drying up of irrigation sources In 1849 Surgeon C.I Smith, after conducting some scientific observations declared that the presence of trees increases the quantity of rain The Superintendent of the Nuggur Division wrote that " Springs of water shaded by trees almost invariably dry up on trees being cleared away This has been observed on the Neilgherry hills and many other woody districts [85] These reports articulated the ideas on the relation between deforestation and its negative effect on physical climate in the Madras Presidency

The metropolitan government in England took cognizance of climatic influence of forests and appointed a committee in 1850, to go into the issue under the guidance of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, Dr. Cleghorn as chairman The focus of

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[8] E Balfour's Report documented the correspondence between the Collectors and the Board of Revenue pertaining to the status of deforestation in the various districts in the Madras Presidency *Ibid* p 8

[9] *Ibid* p 7

the committee was the study of effect of deforestation on physical climate in the tropical countries Though the committee was instructed to work on the tropical forests, it mainly focused on the Indian forests The committee cited the works of Alexander Van Humboldt a famous Naturalist from Germany and others who popularized the relation between forests and climate It was Humboldt who proposed that By felling trees which cover the topes and sides of mountains men of every climate prepare at once two calamities for future generation the want of fuel and the scarcity of water [86] Dr Cleghorn s committee endorsed the Humboldt's idea by arguing that the destruction of the forests on the mountain sloops might result in the diminution of water sources in tropical countries

The Cleghorn committee drawing on the pre-colonial Indian history argued that the conservation of trees by the state for protecting climate and irrigation was not a new phenomenon in India It cited the Emperor Akbar s, decree for growing tree plantation on both sides of the canals from Hissar to Sone Some of the members in the committee, like Dr Williams recommended that the Government in India should interfere in the forest management in order save forests from the extremely injudicious mode of felling by the natives He argued that the natives cut and carry away all accessible both young and old plants without planting anything new in their place [87] Thus the natives were projected as destroyers who do not have any aptitude for conservation The depletion of forests was attributed to the forest resources utilization pattern by the natives The colonial state intervention in the Indian forests therefore was justified on the ground that the natives do not have the sense of scientific forest conservation

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[86] H Cleghorn and others *Report of the Committee appointed by the British Association for the Advancement of Science* published in 21st Proceedings of the *British Association for the Advance of Science* held in Ipswich 1851 p 79

[87] *Ibid* p 82

Dr Cleghorn committee was highly critical of the shifting cultivation practiced by tribes in different parts of the Madras Presidency The Chairmen of the Committee argued that " It causes the most rapid destruction of the forests which it is thus in the course of no very long time seriously affect the cultivation and prosperity of the country The cultivation of the Mulnaad (Rain-country) is solely dependent on rain (there being no irrigation), and require abundance of it The people of the Mulnaad begin already to remark that there is a diminution of rain and I think it highly probable that it is attributable to the vast extent of Coomri clearings all over the country, but especially along the crest of the Ghats [88]

While articulating its views Dr Cleghorn committee used the history of scientific forest conservation that existed in some of the European countries particularly in Germany and France, where special laws were formulated for protection of forests The committee argued that unless the Government in India takes special measures to protect the forests on mountain sloops, the climate and irrigation systems might get destroyed with far reaching consequences [89] Thus, the role of the state in protecting the physical climate by protecting and planting forests was highlighted by the committee In fact its recommendations had a directing baring on the forest conservation policies in India The ideas on deforestation and its negative influence on physical climate and surface irrigation have even influenced the local official perceptions on forest conservation

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[88] *Ibid* p 84
[89] *Ibid* p 91

Dr Cleghorn s book *Forests and Gardens of South India* brings together the correspondence pertaining to the climatic effect of the *Kumri* cultivation Regarding the destructive nature of shifting cultivation the Manager of the Beyour Iron Works factory in South Canara district described that Numberless tracts of magnificent forests which during my short residence in Malabar I have seen swept from existence by the process now under mentioned but I can t refrain whilst an opportunity offer of recording my decided opinion that unless government take some steps (and remedy is easy) to check this system of rotten destruction in a very few years the chief portion of these magnificent forests will present little but a barren waste studded with the stumps of the finest trees which can be adorn or fertilize the district in which they stand [20] Most of these narratives sought the intervention of the government in regulating the shifting cultivation as a desired step in the direction of forest conservation

Dr Cleghorn insisted on the point that the *Kumari* cultivation should be regulated in all the important places such as the neighborhood of truck roads navigating rivers or the sea shores and in all hill localities where there is valuable timber He argued that to quote

In addition to climatic considerations the chief evil of this rude system of culture are the destruction of valuable timber at present urgently required for ship building and railways and the rendering of land unfit for coffee [21] The main object of the proposed method of forest conservation was aimed at meeting the immediate timber required for the various government departments The Working Plan for South Mangalore division shows that in

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[20] Mr J Beaumont Manager of the Byour Iron Works 1st November 1858 in H Cleghorn *Forests and Gardens of South India* p 130

[21] Letter from the Conservator of Forests to the Secretary to the Madras Government 17th August 1859 No 755 in *Ibid* p 137

response to the Conservator of Forest's proposals the Madras Government imposed restrictions of the *Kumri* in 1860 in South Canara District [92]

The Shifting cultivation in the Northern Circars districts was called the *podu* It was practiced by the tribals in some parts of the Eastern Ghats There were two important areas where this system was practiced one, in Godavary region and another was in Vizagapatam and Ganjam districts It was reported by the officials from Vizagapatam that in important forest tracts were cleared away by shifting cultivators The p*odu* therefore was depicted as the main factor responsible for destruction of forests on mountain sloops In 1873 Colonel Beddome the Conservator of Forests reported that

> This plateau (3000 feet plateau) is wonderfully well weaved by numerous streams when all have their rise in the woods which more or less clothe all the small raising hills These latter were all, at a very recent date, covered with fine forests, but this is fast disappearing owing to the ruinous system of hill cultivation Numerous hills have already been turned into bare rocky waste or only clothed with a few date bushes or the poorest description of stunted growth, and if the present of cultivation is allowed to go on unrestricted the entire trees disappear of all woodlands, is only a question of time [93]

However the ideas on forest conservation for protecting surface drainage and rainfall were questioned by revenue officials The report on the waste land rules of Nilgiri district described in detail how the Revenue department officials questioned the scientific credibility of the proposed forest conservancy in India

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[9] E P Stebbing *The Forests of India* Vol II p 302 P W Davis *Working Plan for the South Mangalore Forest Division* Government Press Madras 1934 p 54

Andhra Pradesh District Gazetteer Visagapatnam Vol I first printed in 1907 and reprinted in Hyderabad 1994 pp 117 118

The celebrated work of J P Marsh entitled '*Man and Nature* published in London in 1864 dealt with the effects of deforestation had on the earth and climate At one level the Commissioner of Nilgiris district approved the basic observation of J P Marsh to quote

One important conclusion at least upon the meteorological influence of forests is certain and undisputed the preposition namely that within own limits and near their own borders they maintain a more uniform degree of humidity in the atmosphere that is observed in cleared grounds [24] The Commissioner seems to have been convinced to some extent on the notion that forests regulate the surface drainage At the same time he criticised the Forest department's notion of the scientific forestry inspired by the dissecationist discourse and observed that its scientific nature is extremely obscure He observed that If the natural forest is preserved to guard against hypothetical danger a great immediate advantage in the opening up of the district will be sacrificed and we think the interests of the present generation should not be postponed to circumstances which may never arise [25]

These in fact, resulted in an interesting discourse on the relation between the trees plantation and surface water availability The Superintendent of the Cinchona plantations questioned the applicability of the western principles of forestry in the Indian context He reported that after planting trees in Nilgiri district the streams and springs were completely dried up He further noted that the results recorded by J P Marsh in northern latitudes where the trees draw much less moisture from the soil then they did in the Nilgiris area The Superintendent of the Cinchona argued that

> The quantity of water drawn from the earth by our forested area is therefore probably three times greater than by forest in northern

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Letter from the Commissioner of Nilgiris District in BORP 13th October 1875 No 2852 p 8016
Ib id p 8017

> latitudes It is well known that during sunshine the point of every rootlet of a tree is continuously acting as a pump, which intercepts the water in its flow to the streams throws is continuously acting as a pump throws it up to the leaves where it is evaporated into the atmosphere These pumps do not only exhaust the moisture formatted surface but as the roots penetrate deep into the subsoil they effectually exhaust the moisture to a considerable depth below the surface [96]

Thus planters and some of the officials of the Revenue department articulated an interesting idea that the forest conservation instead of increasing water supply consumes water leading to decrease of water volume in springs and other water sources Thus it was proposed that the preservation of forests may not have positive impact on climate and irrigation sources as was argued by the desiccationist discourse

The Superintendent of the Cinchona plantations criticized the forest officials for propagating that the forest conservation influence physical climate as to quote ' These observations are intended to show the common belief that trees add to the flow of water in springs and streams to be a fallacy, which cannot be sustained by fact theory or hypothesis Even the advocates of this idea admit it to be but an ill-defined theory Under these circumstances I believe it to be undesirable that in dealing with our waste lands we should consign the richest portions to perpetual unproductiveness or in other works to grasp at a shadow while we drop the substance [97] Though the revenue augmentation by clearing the forests appears to be the motive for the revenue authorities the critique of desiccationist theories was sought to be covered in the scientific argumentation

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[96] *Ibid* p 8028
[97] *Ibid* p 8029

The Balfour report published in 1878 strongly advocated the need for forest conservation in India He made following points pertaining to the influence of forests on climate and irrigation sources

> i) That the extensive clearing of a country diminishes the quantity of water that flows over its surface,
> ii) Observation proved that rain often fells and that more dew is deposited in well woodland countries, then where a country from meteorological facts we can presume that the extensive clearing of diminishes the actual quantity of rain falls upon it
> iii) Mountains, particularly when covered with their native forests by any elastic action on the atmosphere, causes clouds to gather ground then condense and collect the vapor of the air and equalize the fall of rains,
> iv) That the forest trees which grown on mountain summits have a structure peculating and fitting to receive the waters of the clouds
> v) That lands destitute of shelter of trees allow of more rapid evaporation of water,
> vi) That independent of the preservation of surface water forests husband and regulate its flow,
> viii) That springs draw their supplies from sources in their immediate vicinity and the presence of trees near those sources seem to prevent the dissipation of the supply of water, and
> viii) That in clearings winch are purely local, springs may disappear without there being any ground to conclude that the annual quantity of rain has diminished [98]

The above mentioned propositions suggested by Balfour were aimed at convincing the government and the natives regarding the necessary of protecting the forest cover By illustrating the influence of forests on climate Balfour advocated that forests should be protected by the state Thus the Balfour 's report attempted to show that there was a pressing necessity to control the deforestation which may be mainly due to the destructive practices of the natives It advocated for conservation of forests by the government

Dr Brandis who was instrumental for forest legislation for Madres Presidency was another official, who forcefully articulated the idea of influence of forests on climate and

[98] *Ibid* pp 6-7

rainfall He argued that forests certainly influence climate, rainfall and irrigation sources At the same time, he admitted the limitations of this idea that to quote '...No data have been established which would justify the hope that by the creation of new forests or the improvement of those existing we shall be able to modify the limits of the regions of moisture or otherwise materially to alter the climate of many districts in the peninsula The great features of climate depend upon cosmic causes which are independent of local circumstances '' Though Dr Brandis was not sure of the scientific character of forestry, he was optimistic on the positive relation between forests and water sources To quote We do not maintain that forest protection will regulate the water supply in rivers to such an extent as to obviate the necessity of construction of large reservoirs for storing the flood-waters what we maintains that the protection of forests on the hill of South India will increase the usefulness of such and other works undertakes to improve the irrigation from these rivers' [100]

But this forceful rearticulation of desiccationist anxieties was not seriously considered by the revenue officials, rather they argued that clearance of forests is necessary for development of the country Sir Willam Robension the Member of the Board of Revenue argued that

> The advancement of populations and cultivation has led to the substitution of agriculture for scrub and jungle through great tracts in South India of late years without any evidence of injurious effect on the south-west or north east trades which supply South India with its moisture The stratifications of the earth s surface which fill the country's springs deep seated though to be uninfluenced by surface verdure-and supply its streams have not changed and cultivated land has doubtless proved here as

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D Brandis *Suggestions Regarding Forest Administration* p 63
[100] *Ibid* p 71

> elsewhere, a better absorbent of moisture than denudation been affecting the solar heat in general in recent years Human health has improved where formerly malarias fevers searched the pioneers of cultivation under jungle influence and the hunts of wild beasts have receded I think therefore that this fashionable scare need not trouble the Famine Commission in relations to the failure of the monsoons and actual droughts arising therefrom [10]

Thus the scientific forestry argument of the desiccationaists was not recognized as credible rather it was subjected to sever criticism within the colonial bureaucratic structure The revenue officials argued that forest conservation was not necessary rather the clearance of the forests improve public health They also argued that the clearance of forests no way effect the physical climate and rainfall pattern

In the Madras Presidency, the native revenue officials were critical of the necessity of forest conservation on the lines advocated by the forest establishment and disiccationist discourse For instance Srinivasaraghva Ingar s report on the British rule in the Madras Presidency mentioned that these anxieties, particularly regarding the dimension of rainfall were common He argued that such narratives existed even in the medieval period Not convinced by the scientific credentials of the influence of the forests on the climate, Srinivasa Raghava Inyangar argued that the Forest department s propagation of forests conservation is based on hypothetical danger To quote him I examined the accounts given in the old reports regarding the character of the agricultural season each year from the beginning of the century and I find that there is no reason to believe either that the rainfall has diminished or that unfavorable sessions are more frequent now than in the past [1] Thus he questioned the belief that the extensive clearances of forests would have a negative affect on the climate and

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[9] Cited in *Ibid* p 72

[10] S Srinivasa Raghava Iangyar *Memorandum of the Progress of the Madras Presidency During the last forty Years of British Administration* Asian Educational Service New Delhi 1994 p 51 originally published by the Government Press Madras 1893

productiveness of the soil He argued that " The importance in subserving the needs of the agriculture cannot of course be over-estimated, but there is, on the whole, no reason to suppose that their clearance has diminished the rainfall to such an extent as materially to affect that yield of lands The disappearance of forests has undoubtedly improved the public health for many tracts of country" [103] Thus the scientific basis located in the desiccationist ideas and the marshalling of those ideas for the forest conservation was questioned by the native revenue officials They believed that the clearance of forests would facilitate the agrarian expansion and improve the health conditions in the country

Thus there was a lengthy debate on the extent of forests influence on the physical climate and surface irritations in the Madras Presidency The discourse centered on climatic effect of forests undoubtedly played a crucial role in evolution of state forestry It provided wider popularity to forests conservation and facilitated the colonial state intervention in forests with its monopolistic control

The crucial aspect is that the desiccationist discourse in the Madras Presidency was not a monolithic one, rather it was questioned and criticized within the colonial bureaucratic structure The revenue officials questioned the scientific credibility of arguments marshaled in favor of the forest conservation as result of which the forest conservation could not achieve the status of a scientific agency before 1870 Rather it remained a part of land revenue administration

However, by the 1880s under the forceful influence of the Dr Brandis and others the colonial state took initiation and come up with the forest establishments in most of the

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[103] *Ibid* 52

districts in the Madras Presidency in order to provide wood requirements of the various government departments such as the railways and public works departments From the year 1870 the Madras forest polices taken another twist mainly due to the financial decentralization introduced in the year 1870 Under this scheme, the provincial governments were instructed to generate more revenue resources Due to this, after 1870, the Forest department attempted to increase its revenue surplus by expanding the logging operations But the attempt of the Forest department to expand its activities brought them in conflict with the Revenue department

DEBATE ON FIRE-WOOD MANAGEMENT

Fire wood is an essential requirement for people in day to-day life Until the year 1860 no tax was levied on the fire wood collected by people in their neighbouring forests Introduction of the railways and their extraordinary consumption of wood had generated sever fire-wood crisis in the Madras Presidency This situation compelled the government to intervene in the fire wood management in the Madras Presidency Between the years 1865 and 1880 there was an intensive debate between the Forest and Revenue departments on the nature of the policy that should be adopted for the management of fire-wood in the Presidency This debate was centered on the question of acquiring the control on the fire-wood management

The concept of fire-wood management had a long history in the Madras Presidency Even before the introduction of the railways the region felt the fire-wood crises due to various other factors Dr Cleghorn the Conservator of Forests pointed out in his book *Forests and Gardens of South India* that many towns felt the fire wood crisis He estimated

that in 1852 alone 98 652 tons of fire-wood was consumed by the government departments and public in the Madras Presidency [104] This heavy consumption of fire-wood coupled with the introduction of the railways and population increase aggravated the situation further the consequence of which was a severe fire wood crisis in the Madras Presidency Describing the scarcity of fire wood the Conservator of Forests described that There can be no doubt that in the neighborhood of large towns along the lines of railway in the vicinity of iron foundries, sugar factories and engineers workshops this necessary of life is more scarce and expensive than formerly owing to the distance from which it is brought and the unrestricted license with which it is cut [105]

Prior to the creation of the Forest department the fire-wood management was carried out under the Jungle Conservancy rules executed under the supervision of the Revenue department The District Collectors were empowered to formulate the local rules to regulate and manage fire-wood jungles The fire-wood tax for the first time was imposed in the Madras Presidency in the year 1860 it was a *seigniorage* of 5 annas for a cart load of fire wood [106] However the Forest department followed a careful policy in the management of the fire wood for it would interfere into the day to day access by the people In 1862 Mr R H Beddome the Conservator of Forests submitted a report to the Board of Revenue arguing that the bona fide *ryots* should be allowed to have fire wood free of any taxation [107]

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[4] H Cleghorn *Forests and Gardens of South India* p 152

Ibid p 150

[6] BORP 23rd August 1871 No 3644 This Board of Revenue Proceeding consists of letters from the District Collectors in response to the Conservator of Forests proposals on the increase of *seigniorage* on the fire wood in the Madras Presidency It also has several details on the history of the fire wood management in the Madras Presidency

V S Krishna Swamy *Working plan for North Cuddapah Forest Division* p 21

In 1865 the Conservator of Forests proposed the rules and the system of *seigniorage* on fire-wood jungles. Reacting to there proposals, the Kurnool District Collector noted that the forest conservation should not interfere with the communal rights in forests exercised by the people in the Madras Presidency. He also rejected the system of taxing the charcoal manufacturing and fire wood. He felt that the imposition of tax on the most necessary articles like fire-wood would impose a heavy financial burden on people. He expressed apprehension that the imposition of tax on fire-wood may lead to constant struggle between the people and the government machinery.[108]

In order to solve the contention between the Forest and Revenue departments on the issue of control over the fire wood management the system of License and Voucher was introduced in 1865. Under this system, licenses were given for fire wood and other wood requirements of the people by the revenue officials while the vouchers indicating the forest stocks were given by the Forest department. The logic of the system was that while the forest officials were not allowed to take money and the revenue officials were prevented from misusing forest resources. Thus, this system was formulated by the Madras Government to keep both the Revenue and Forest departments in good terms. Yet this system failed to bring the desired results and the conflict between these departments continued to be a vexed issue.[109]

The problem of the fire-wood was acute mainly in those areas where the geographical conditions necessitated people to depend on forests. In 1865, the Nellore District Collector proposed a scheme for provision of fire-wood to the population of Nellore town. He felt that

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[108] Letter form the Collector of the Cuddapah District to Secretary to the BOR, in BORP, 10[th] July 1865, No. 3874, pp. 3727-3731.

[109] *Ibid*

in the drier districts, the government should undertake the conservancy measures to meet the fire-wood requirements of the local people [110] Because of the opposition from public the Madras Government reduced the *seigniorage* on fire-wood from 5 annas to 4 annas for a cart load and abolished the tax on bamboos in 1865 The reason for such measures was stated by the Board of Revenue as

> The restrictions which the Government have felt compelled of late years to lay on the timber and firewood trade in the interests of the larger community, already fire wood problem constituted a very heavy and novel burden on the resources of all class at a time when the process of all articles of consumption have greatly risen and it is on every ground most undesirable to add unnecessarily to the unpopularity of forest laws which in all ages and countries have been and must be especially odious to the people however necessary they may be deemed by Government [111]

Though the Forest department sought regulation on the use of forest resources through taxation such a scheme was hated by the people and the revenue officials The reasons for the unpopularity of the Forest department was described by Mr R H Beddome the Conservator of Forests that Previous to the formation of the Forest department, almost entire timber trade was in the hands of the native revenue officials and rich *ryots* already intimately connected with them most of the revenue now made by the government went in those into their pockets so naturally those revenue official and rich *ryots* are hostile and put numerous complaints against it [112] Thus both the revenue officials and the native people opposed imposition of any restrictions on the use of forest resources

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Mentioned in Letter from the Conservator of Forests to the Secretary to the Revenue department in BORP 22 May 1866 No 3569 pp 3422 25

G O No 1767 31st July 1865 in BORP 23 August 1871 No 3644 p 6307

Letter from the Conservator of Forests to Collector of Kurnool District in BORP 10 July 1865 No 3874 pp 5727 31

In order to regulate the fire-wood consumption by people, the Madras Government increased the *seigniorage* on all categories of fire-wood loads in July 1869. The *seigniorage* was increased from 4 annas to 1 rupee on each cart load and 3 annas were charged per a bullock load of 200 lbs and 9 pices per a head load of 50 lbs. These rates were applied to all sections of purchasers. This measure was introduced to regulate peoples' access to fire-wood and provide wood to the railway companies. The pressure from the railways for wood was so heavy that their wood consumption had increased from 9821 tons in 1863 to 54358 tones in 1868.[113] This heavy consumption of fire wood by the railway companies compelled the Madras Government to intervene in the fire-wood management in the Madras Presidency.

The increase in the tax on fire-wood was resisted by the people and numerous complaints were put forward spelling out the troubles they were facing due to increase of tax on fire-wood in the Madras Presidency. Some people from the Trichinopoly district submitted a petition to the government requesting for the exemption from the payment of all types of *seigniorage* on fire-wood.[114] As a whole, it was the poor people who got severely affected due to the regulations on the access to forest resources.

As we have shown earlier, the main reason for involvement of the Forest department in the fire wood management was to meet the heavy demands of wood by the railway companies. The fire wood reserves were created under the supervision of the Forest department. Some of the quick growing trees like *Acacia Arabica, Acacia amara, Albizzia Lebbek, Melia Azadirachta and Casurina equisetiflha* were introduced in plantations to meet the demand by the railway companies. For instance, in 1866, in some of the districts like

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G.O. No. 2093, July 1869, in BORP, 23rd August 1871, p. 6308.

[4] Letter from the Assistant Collector of South Arcot District, to the Collector, 6th May 1870, No. 198, in BORP, 18th October 1870, No. 6193.

Cuddapah, South Arcot and Salem were brought into the fold of the Forest department, which had focused on fire-wood plantations [115]

After the 1870s, the Forest department attempted to expand its conservation operations mainly to increase the revenue surplus by supplying the wood to the railway companies and also by collecting tax on fire-wood. This attempt, of course was opposed by the officials of the Revenue department. For instance, in 1870, Mr. R.H. Beddome, the Conservator of Forests proposed to increase the *seigniorage* on fire wood and accordingly his proposals were communicated to the District Collectors of the Madras Presidency. Most of the Collectors opposed the proposals by the Conservator of Forests to increase the tax on fire wood supplied to the public. For instance, the Ganjam District Collector, in response to the proposal by the Conservator of Forests to increase tax on the fire wood, argued that the government should not increase the tax as it may cause trouble for people in day-to day life

The Vizagapatam District Collector argued that the increase in the tax on fire wood may create problems to people, particularly those who depended on fire-wood selling as means of livelihood [116] The Kistna District Collector, on the other hand, felt that the main reason for the fire-wood problem was that most of the forests and waste lands were brought under cultivation, which traditionally used to be the source for fire wood. He informed the Board of Revenue that the allotment of land for the fire-wood plantations had became a difficult task for him [117]

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[115] Campbell Weaker, The Plantations and Firewood Reserves in the Madras Presidency, in D. Brandis and A. Symathies (ed), *The Proceedings of the Forest Conference held at Simla*, 1875, Government Press, Simla, p. 94

[116] BORP, 23rd August 1871, No. 3644, pp. 6304-5

[117] Letter from the Collector of Kistna District, 11th November 1870, No. 4886, in *Ibid*, p. 6309

Similarly, the Deputy Collector of Nellore District argued that the increase in the *seigniorage* rate on the fire-wood at one rupee per cart load may severely affect the public in his district He expressed apprehension that the increase in tax on fire wood may deprive the people who depended on fire wood selling and may drive them to commit crimes In particular, the imposition of the heavy *seigniorage* on fire-wood, argued by the Collector that would deprive the legitimate livelihood of the Yanadi tribe and compel them to indulge in criminal activities [118] These types of apprehensions were constantly expressed by the revenue officials in opposition to the forest conservation policies in the Madras Presidency

The Cuddapah District Collector was not only highly critical of the *seigniorage* rates proposed by the Conservator of Forests on fire wood but expressed the fear that such increase in the tax and interference by the Forest department may result in the severe public discontent against the government machinery itself He argued that that the tax on fire wood will deprive the communal rights and privileges of the *ryots* in the neighboring forests and thus negatively influence the very legitimacy of the colonial rule and its administration While criticising the policies of the Forest department, he pointed out that ' It is natural that the Forest department should seek for the welfare of their department but in many ways this welfare is entirely antagonistic to the exceptional advantages which are most righteously problems to the poorer class of the community [119]

The Sub Collector of Tanjore District informed the Board of Revenue that the increased *seigniorage* on fire-wood may deprive the livelihood of tribals who depended on the fire-

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[8] Letter form the Sub Collector of Nellore Singarayakonda to the Secretary to the BOR 5 [t] November 1870 No 537 in *Ibid* p 6306

[119] Letter from the Collector of Cuddapah District in *Ibid* pp 6306 11

wood selling.[120] He advocated for limited interference of forest conservation in his district. The Madura District Collector felt that the increase in the *seigniorage* on fire wood may result in troubles for people. On the nature of the Forest department's intervention in fire-wood management, he commented that "... There is an evident desire on his (Conservator of Forests) part to increase the forest revenue at all hazards by raising the seigniorage, and in the second place to consider the value of timber in the market as nearly pure profit to the wood cutters, and on his supposition Mr. Beddome attempts to proportion the seigniorage to the market price and does not see that a tree while standing in a jungle is of no more than that of the surrounding rock".[121] The Collector of Tinnevelly District criticised the proposals of the Conservator of Forests on the fire-wood tax, and to quote.

> These rates have it is true, been put in force under the management of Revenue officers, but they are most oppressive and in fact a heavy tax on a necessary of life and an occupation which is so laborious and unproductive that it is only resorted to by the poorest of the poor, altogether, there are so many objections to the tax, that I would be very glad to see it done away with, Major Beddome argues that such a step would deprive the Government of the revenue from firewood in districts traversed by Railways, but I do not see that this would fellow, for Government are differently situated with regard to the people of the country who have prescriptive rights to firewood for domestic purpose, and the Railway Companies, who without any claim of this nature create a heavy and expensive demand on our firewood resources.[122]

The above mentioned views and responses of revenue administrators show that most of the District Collectors in the Madras Presidency opposed the attempt by the Forest department to increase the *seigniorage* on fire- wood on the ground that it would interfere in

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120 Letter from the Collector of Tanjore District, December in *Ibid*, p. 6313.
121 *Ibid*, pp. 6313-14.
122 *Ibid*, p. 6314.

the existence of customary rights by the people increase financial burden and result in unnecessary tension between the government and people

Despite the opposition from the Revenue department the Forest department continued its systematic intervention in the management of forests for revenue appropriation The driving force appears to be the railways and their ever increasing demand for fire-wood In other words the wood requirement of the railways was the main factor that compelled the Madras Government to undertake measures in conserving fire-wood in some parts of the Madras Presidency In 1873 the Madras railway company consumed 58 719 tones of fire wood and the Agent of the railway company informed the government that his company would require around 78 000 tones of wood per year in future In the same year the South Indian railway company consumed 3 500 tones and the Agent of the Company projected that the annual consumption of fire-wood by the company would go up by 51 000 tones per year in future Thus for instance in the year 1873 the total consumption of the fire wood by the railway companies was 62219 tones Due to this massive appropriation of the wood resources by the railway companies the fire wood management acquired significance in the Madras Presidency [12] It was in response to this demand from the railways that the fire wood plantations were initiated in some of the districts like Trichinopoly and North Arcot where the quick growing plants like Casuarina were introduced in 1874 [13] By 1874 the total extent of the fire wood reserves was a staggering 1 01 202 acres in the Madras Presidency [14]

In the Nilgiri district exotic species like Eucalyptus and Acacia were introduced in the mid 1860s itself The wood extracted from the plantations in the Nilgiris was sent to the fire

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D Brandis and Symthies (ed) *Proceedings of the Forest Conference* p 101
Ibid pp 96-97
Ibid p 102

wood market in the neighbouring towns and the railway companies In 1875-76, the total quantum of the fire-wood procured from the plantations in the Nilgiri district was 1832 tones [126]

In the pretext of providing the fire-wood to people, the Forest department pushed its agenda of the forest reservation While commenting on the Madura District Collector's opposition on the interference in the customary rights of the people, the Conservator of Forests pointed out that '... When people are allowed the privilege of taking wood free of any seigniorage they cannot complain of having to go a few miles for it, and it must be born in mind that without reservation the entire disappearance of wood-lands is only the question of time, and that the reserves are of the utmost importance to the welfare of a district and the people generally on many considerations Forest Officers, who see how rapidly forests and jungles are everywhere disappearing, know that a time will very shortly come when every one will see the advantage of the system and bless the foresight that understood the necessity before it was too late" [127]

The real imperative for the Forest department's intervention in the fire-wood management was that besides the railways, there was a heavy demand for fire wood and charcoal from the iron making industries After the 1880s, large scale iron making process was attempted with the liberal support from the Madras Government in South India Some of the iron-making factories were the Proto Nova and Trinomalai factory in South Arcot, Napiour Foundry in Malabar and the East India Iron Company in the Madras town In the

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[6] Letter from the Conservator of Forests to the Secretary to the Revenue Department, 12[h] June 1876 No 826 in BORD, 11[th] August 1996 p 6884

[7] Letter form R H Beddome, the Conservator of Forests to the Secretary to the Revenue Department, 27[th] March 1878 in BORP, 17[th] May 1878 p 4465

absence of coal mines in the Madras Presidency these industries have heavily depended on the forests for charcoal and fire-wood While commenting on the fire-wood demands by the iron making industries Dr Brandis wrote that One of the main objects of forestry in this Presidency must be the production of charcoal for iron smelting and this can only to be effected by the formation a strict protection of reserved forests in the vicinity of those localities where iron is still made or where the conditions for making it are favorable [128]

In spite of the opposition by the revenue officials on the intervention of the Forest department in fire wood management, by 1879, around 1,46,690 acres of the forest land was given to the Forest department for fire-wood management These reserves were mainly formed in those districts where railway tracts have gone through [129] In 1881 Dr Brandis estimated that the fire wood requirement in the Madras Presidency was to the tune of 80 500 tones per year He felt that most of the fire wood business was carried out by the private traders who indiscriminately destroyed the valuable forests in the Madras Presidency He recommended for the government intervention in the fire-wood trade under the supervision of the Forest department [130]

Thus the fire wood management gave impetus to the forest conservation measure in the Madras Presidency Especially the requirements of the railways and iron smelting industries created heavy demand for the fire wood This demand compelled the Madras Government to undertake the fire wood reserves in various parts of the Madras Presidency The Forest department was assigned the task of conserving fire wood plantains However,

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[8] D Brandis *Suggestions Regarding the Forest Administration* p 53
Annual Report on Plantations and Fuel Reserves forwarded by the Conservator of Forests for the year 1877 78 in BORP 21st February 1879 p 1236
D Brandis *Suggestions Regarding the Forest Administration* p 115

the debate on the fire wood management highlighted the issue of the relation between the people and forests. In this context the revenue officials argued that the Forest department should not interfere in the fire wood management as that would deprive the people of their traditional communal rights in the forests in the Madras Presidency. The whole debate also shows that the nature of forest policies was actually aimed at catering to the wood requirements of the government departments at the cost of the subsistence requirements of the local people.

DEBATE ON MANAGEMENT OF MINOR FOREST PRODUCTS

The minor forest products constitute an important part of the forest resources. The tribals in the hill as well as plain areas traditionally collected and sold the minor forest products as a major livelihood activity in the Madras Presidency. After 1870 the Forest department attempted to the control trade in the minor forest products, which till then was under the hands of the revenue authorities. This competition to control the trade in minor forest products resulted in a conflict between the two departments.

Prior to the establishment of the Forest department in the Madras Presidency, the collection of minor forest products were given in auction to the contractors and the revenue derived from this source was credited to the Land Revenue department. In order to increase its revenue, the Forest department attempted to acquire control over the minor forest products. Initially, the timber trade constituted the main component of income of the Forest department, but in 1867, Dr. Cleghorn, the Conservator of Forests expressed desire to involve the Forest department in the collection of minor forest products.[31]

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[31] Annual Administrative Report prepared by the Conservator of Forests, H. Cleghorn for 1866-67, in BORP (Land Revenue) 17th February 1891, No. 120, p. 10.

The increase in the value for minor forest products also made the Forest department to attempt to acquire control over the minor forest products trade that was mostly under the hands of the plain based traders The Forest officials argued that the innocent tribals exploited by plain traders acting as middle man between the state and the tribals and between the tribals and market They also argued that the middle men paid lower amounts for the forest products collected by the tribals and thus, exploit their hard labor The forest officials suggested that the tribals be employed in the collection of the minor forest products under the supervision of the Forest department But the Board of Revenue rejected this proposal and instructed the Forest department not to interfere in the collection of minor forest products in 1868.[132]

However, the forest officials continued to make their effort to control the trade in minor forest products. In 1870, the Conservator of Forests proposed that the collection minor forest products should be brought under the control of the Forest department He argued that the plain based traders cheat the innocent tribals and procure the minor forest products from them at much cheaper rates He suggested that the Forest department should be empowered to undertake the systematic collection of the minor forest products by employing tribal people [133]

The Madras Government as its part promptly communicated the proposals by the Conservator of Forests to all the District Collectors in the Presidency The way that most of the Collectors responded to the proposals of the Conservator of Forests shows the hostile relationship that existed between the Forest and Revenue departments in the Madras

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[132] BORP 30[1] September 1874 No 2813 No 189
[133] BORP 20[1] July 1870 No 4961

Presidency The Ganjam District Collector, in response to the proposals by the Conservator of Forests was bold to argue that ' I am very averse to any interference with what have become almost the prescriptive rights of these semi savage people to gather for their own benefit the hill products in this district '[154] In opposition to the proposals by the Conservator of the Forests the Vizagapatam District Collector argued that the government should not interfere in the collection of minor forest products that may result in an unnecessary conflict between the tribal people and the government machinery [155] The Collector of Cuddapah District felt that the interference by the Forest department in the collection of minor forest products may lead to a conflict between the people and the government in tribal areas [156] Thus most of the local revenue official opposed the interference in the Forest department in the tribal pockets The main reason for revenue officials' opposition on the interference by the Forest department in the tribal areas was their apprehension of the tribal revolts

While criticising the proposals by the Conservator of Forests, the North Arcot District Collector argued that those proposals were aimed at monopolistic exploitation of the valuable jungle products and acquire control over jungles itself His argument against the interference by the Forest department in the tribal areas was as the following lines

> I would observed that the Government have always strongly insisted on the protection of the village and communal rights to enjoy certain privileges in regard to the use of wood and other forest produce and have resisted many attempts of the Forest Department to curtail those privilege and consider that if the charge Beddome now desire to carry on sanctioned a very great

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[154] Letter from the Collector of the Ganjam District to the Secretary BOR in BORP 21st August 1871 No 5585 p 6243

[155] Collector of Vizagapatam District to the Secretary to BOR BORP 24th August 1870 No 653 p 6243

[156] Letter from the Cuddapah District Collector to the BOR in BORP 15th May 1871 No 96 p 6245

stride will have been taken in the in the way of suppressing those rights and privileges The Government have ascertained for making any revenue out of the collection of those forest produce and have literally left them upon to all commoners If the forest produce is once placed in the charge Beddomes' department it will follow a consequence that the forests will be forthwith and for ever closed to all villagers or ryots The subordinates of the department will regard everyman who attempts to enter the jungles as a possible thief of the produce in their carriage and the result will constant interference with the movements of the people and it would lead to very great general annoyance [137]

The Collector of Salem District however came forwarded with an interesting suggestion While the Forest department was allowed to collect minor forest products only in the reserved forests, that in the unreserved forests, the hill man should be allowed to collect the minor forest products and sell to whomever they want He argued that the Forest department should not be granted the monopoly over the minor forest products collection in the unreserved forests [138] Thus, the interference of the Forest department in the collection of minor forest products was opposed by most of the revenue officials on the ground that it would lead to tribal revolts

The main reason for such a strong opposition on part of the revenue officials against the interference of the Forest department in the tribal areas was not entirely unfounded In the Andhra agency areas, there were series of tribal that revolts erupted against the intervention by the British rule in the hills [139] These revolts posed a threat to the local revenue officials by undermining the very legitimacy of the general administration [140]

Letter form the Collector of North Arcot to the Secretary to BOR *Ibid*

[8] Letter from the Collector of Salem district to the Secretary to BOR *Ibid*

Atlury Murali Alluri Sitarama Raju and the Manyam Rebellion of 1922 24 *in Social Scientist* Vol 131 April 1984 pp 3 33 David Arnold Rebellious Hillman The Gudem Rampa Raisings 189? 1924 in Ranajit Guha (ed) *Subaltern Studies Essays on South Asian History and Society* Vol I Oxford University Press New Delhi 1982

[140] VNVK Sastry and K V Subba Reddy *Evolution of schedule Area and Changes in the Muttadari System in Andhra Area* Tribal Cultural Research Center and Training Institute Government of Andhra Pradesh Press

The important point is that the forest officials perceived the control on minor forest products as a facilitating factor for their intervention in the non dense forest regions While mentioning the necessity of bringing the management of the minor forest products under the supervision of the Forest department Dr Brandis made a strong plea that the forest products which were carelessly collected by the tribals should be brought under the management of the Forest department [141]

By the 1880s there was a pressing pressure on the forest resource base due the timber requirements of the colonial state for various infrastructure and construction activities It was this necessity that compelled the Madras Government to formulate administrative measures and initiate series of forest conservation operations in the Presidency Thus most of the districts in the Madras Presidency were brought under the forest administrative network But the revenue officials continue to oppose the conservation measures of the Forest department wherever they perceived threat that the Forest department was encroaching into their economic and administrative domain

ADMINISTRATIVE MEASURES FOR FOREST MNAGEMENT

The first major step with regard to the forest management in the Madras Presidency was the establishment of the Forest department in 1856 with Dr Cleghorn as the Conservator of Forests Initially the Forest department activities were confined to the conservation of valuable timber trees like teak and sandal wood The village jungles and waste lands were supervised by the Revenue department under the Jungle Conservancy Fund From 1860 to

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Hyderabad 1991 This report consist of the detailed account on the various tribal movement erupted in opposition to the intervention of the British rule in the Agency areas of the Andhra region

D Brandis *Suggestion Regarding Forest Administration* p 270

1882 the history of the forest polices in the Madras Presidency were mainly the struggle between the Forest and Revenue departments to control the village jungle lands

Most of the forest officials criticised the dual organisation for the management of forests in the Madras Presidency Mr R H Beddome the Conservator of the Forests felt that

Although in forest matters in Madras had the start of the rest of India there was a tendency to retrogression owing to want of support form the Board of Revenue and Collectors [47] He proposed for the amalgamation of Jungle Conservancy department with the Forest department to increase the efficiency of the forest conservation in the Madras Presidency One of the main reasons for this demand appears to be that the Government of India insisted on showing the revenue surplus by the Forest department Therefore the forest officials proposed for the amalgamation of forest and jungle conservancy branches to enhance the revenue extractions by the Forest department

In 1872 the Government of India dispatched a letter to the Madras Government where it insisted that the Forest department in the Madras Presidency should come up with better financial results The Secretary for the Department of Agriculture Revenue and Commerce requested the Madras Government to undertake the forest reservation for a systematic forest management [143] In response to this suggestion the Madras Government transferred the forest the management responsibility from the Conservator of Forests to Collectors in 1872 to improve the revenue extraction from the forest conservation [144] This change was justified on the ground that the Forest department unable to perform well under the direct supervision of

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Annual Administrative Report prepared by R H Beddome the Conservator of Forest in BORP 17th February 1891 No 120 (Land Revenue) pp 11-12

Proceedings of Madras Government in BORP 26th July 1872 No 1427 p 412

C D McLean *Manual of Administration in Madras Presidency* p 515

the Conservator of Forests The financial transactions of the Forest department under the supervision of the Conservator of Forests as follows

Financial Transactions of Forest Department under the Conservator of Forests

Year	Receipts	Expenditure	Surplus
1856 57	237439	105647	132792
1857 58	150569	77405	73164
1858 59	119751	89524	30227
1859 60	503441	109851	393590
1860 61	353448	168716	183732
1861 62	217284	213451	3833
1862 63	182449	175777	6672
1863 64	243642	204303	39339
1864 65	330569	196657	133912
1865 66	321581	259802	61779
1866 67	338607	224015	114592
1867 68	424185	272840	151345
1868 69	391179	269700	121479
1869 70	495789	286691	209098
1870 71	339762	294860	44902
1871 72	418882	345716	72166
Total	5068577	3294955	1772622

Sources Proceedings of the Board of Revenue, 18th November 1875 No 224 p 8824

The above mentioned table shows that the Forest department able to show the considerable revenue surplus in the Madras Presidency The revenue extracted from forest conservation activities from 1856 to 1870 consistently increased but after 1870s there was a slight fall in the surplus income from forest operations due to increase in the establishment changes This resulted in warning from the Government of India to increase revenue surplus In response to this the Madras Government transferred the forest management responsibility from the Conservator of Forests to the District Collectors for better revenue generation in 1872 The revenue transactions of the Forest department under the supervision of the Collectors as follows

Financial Transactions of the Forest Department under the Collectors

Year	Receipts	Total charges	Surplus	Deficit
1872-73	418767	478147		59380
1873-74	449541	353184	96357	
1874-75	364326	397872		33546

Sources. Proceedings of the Board of Revenue, 18th November 1875 No 224 p 8824

The above mentioned table shows the financial transactions of the Forest department under the supervision of the Collectors It shows the deficit of revenue surplus from forest management In fact, negative growth in revenue surplus was reported It was mainly due to increase in establishment charges Thus the Collector supervision of Forest department was failed in the Madras Presidency As result of it again forest management responsibility was given back to the Conservator of Fortes in 1875 It shows the fact that the revenue generation was the main object for the Forest department in the Madras Presidency It also shows that the revenue officials could not manage forest resources as they were expected off

In order to improve the revenue surplus, the Conservator of Forests proposed that the entire forest landscape in the Madras Presidency should be given for the management of the Forest department for better financial results Mr Stroke the acting Secretary to the Madras Government rejected the Conservator of Forests suggestion on the ground that the interference of the Forest department in the village jungle may negatively affect the communal rights of people [145] The main reason for this rejection was that the Madras Government did not want to loose the income from the jungle conservancy to the imperial budget

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[145] BORP 12 December 1876 No 3148 p 10101

Income from the Forest and the Jungle Conservancy Departments

Official Year	Receipts	Charges	Balance						
	Imperial Rs	Jungle Conservancy Rs	Total	Imperial	Jungle conserva cy Rs	Total Rs	Imperial Rs	Jungle Conservancy Rs	Total Rs
1873-74	4 64 194	1 66 892	6 31,086	3 53 184	2 26 724	5,79 908	+1 11 010	59 832	+ 51 178
1874-75	3 64 326	1 54 615	5,18 941	3,97 872	2 23 140	6 21,012	- 33 546	68 525	1 03 071
1875 76	4 26 389	2 51 577	6,77 936	4 30,083	2 30 869	6 60,952	3 724	20,708	+16,984
1876 77	4 15 312	1 77 974	5 93 286	4 13 970	2 28 703	6 42 673	+ 1 342	50 729	- 49 387
1877 78	4 04 164	1 53 657	5 57,831	3 84,493	2 06 199	5 88 692	+ 21 671	- 52 542	30,871
1878-79	3 83 694	2 36 266	6 19,960	3 41 804	1 70 368	5 12,172	+ 41 890	+ 65 898	+1 07 788
1879 80	3 65 750	2 62 248	6,27,998	3 81,228	1 70 001	5 51 239	15 478	+ 92 237	+ 76,759
1880-81	5 01 839	2 35 054	7,36 893	3 52 004	1 69 454	5 21 458	+ 1 49 835	+ 65 600	+ 2 15 435
1881-82	5 06 710	2 99 428	0 06 138	3 91 186	1 13 177	6 04 363	+ 1 15 524	+ 18 251	+ 2 01 775
1882 83	5 63899	3 40 015	9 03 914	4 15 453	2 21 100	6 36 558	+ 1 43 441	+ 1 18 915	+ 2 67,356
Total	43 96 24 7	22 77 726	66 73 97 3	38 59 282	20 59 745	59 19 027	+5 36 965	+2 17 981	+7 54 946

Source C D Mc Lean, Manual of Administration in Madras Presidency, Vol II 1985, p 235

The table mentioned in the above page shows that within the span of nine years the Forest department was able to show the surplus of Rs 5 36 965 and the jungle conservancy fund had the surplus of Rs 2 17 981 It shows the fact that the Jungle Conservancy department was able to generate good surplus This was the reason why the Forest and Revenue departments competed with each other to control the village jungle conservancy fund The Board of Revenue and the revenue officials were very reluctant to transfer the Jungle Conservancy lands to the Forest department s control for that would result in loss of revenue to the Madras Province

The influential policy makers like Dr Brandis ultimately prevailed upon He proposed for the amalgamation of the Jungle Conservancy fund and Forest department for a better management of the forest resource in the Madres Presidency He argued that " The villagers have not derived any special benefits from the management of the Jungle Conservancy lands they have grazed cattle in them and collected fire-wood they have done the same in the other waste lads as well as in most of forests There is no difference except in the name and on paper between these two classes of lands If the village reserves of the Jungle Conservancy Fund are to do any good to the country they must be managed as they are in South Arcot by a professional Forest Officers and their protection will require the same legal provision as the protection of the forests "[146]

Thus by the 1880s a systematic administrative structure was evolved for the management of the forest resources in the Madras Presidency Introduction of infrastructure networks in the form of shipbuilding and the railways and their massive appropriation of the timber resources was better taken care with the new forest conservation policies of the

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D Brandis *Suggestions Regarding the Forest Administration* pp 9 10

Madras Government Besides taking care of the timber requirements of the government departments the colonial state also perceived the forest resources as a potential revenue generating area The desiccationist discourse has come handy to push policies for the conservation of forests For the protection of climate and irrigation sources the Madras Government formulated interventionist policies for the forest management and increase in tree cover But all need seem to be the timber requirements of the colonial state However the evolution of forest policy in the Madras Presidency had gone through a series of contestations of claims between the forest and the revenue officials for each had different interests in understanding of the forest landscape Both of them tried to push their interests in the forest policy framework As result of this we have multiple narratives on the forest policies in the Madras Presidency

III
LEGAL DEBATES ON THE FOREST POLICIES IN MADRAS PRESIDNECY

A happy and contented population is better than flourishing forests [1]

The above observation was made by The Government of Madras by the way of its rejection of the proposed policy initiatives by the Government of India. This macro level of difference in perspective between the center and provincial governments had an echo at micro level in the provincial administration. One finds serious difference in the possible forest policy to be followed between the Revenue and the Forest departments within the Madras Presidency.

Between the years 1865 and 1882, there was an intense debate on the forest tenure pattern that should be adopted in South India. There were two main themes around which the debates were held: one, the nature of peoples' rights in the forests; and another, the nature of state intervention in the forest management. The present chapter analyses the legal ideas and debates that went into making the Madras Forest Act of 1882. The questions that are examined in this chapter are: How for the rivalry between the Forest and Revenue departments influenced the debates on the forest tenure? How the colonial bureaucracy perceived and defined the people's rights to have access to forests? And, how did the consensus arrive at in the Madras Presidency on the forest legislation, which was resulted in the promulgation of the Madras Forest Act of 1882.

B H. Baden Powell, "Forest Legislation and the Defects of the Existing Law", in J.S. Gamble and B.H. Baden Powell (ed), *Report of the Proceedings of the Forest Conference held in Allahabad*, 1873-74, Government Press, Allahabad, 1874, p. 7.

The hostile relations between the Forest and Revenue departments on the issue of control over the forests and waste lands had a significant bearing on the debates on the forest legislation in the Madras Presidency. The Board of Revenue and the revenue officials consistently opposed the proposals sent by the Government of India on forest legislation with an innovative counter argument. They argued that forest tracts in South India were the communal property enjoyed by the people since times immemorial.

Some of the studies on the colonial forest policies argued that the forest acts enacted by the British were formulated after an intense debate within the colonial bureaucracy. Satpal Sangwan argues that the Forest Act of 1878 was formulated by the British Government after a rigorous debate that took place within the colonial bureaucracy. For him, the debate by the colonial officials on the forest legislation was not a monolith one, rather divergent views were expressed by the colonial bureaucracy on the nature of forest legislation that should be adopted for the management of the forests in India. He argues that it was this discourse that went on making the Indian Forest Act of 1878.[2] Ramachandra Guha, while writing on the making of the India Forest Act of 1878, argues that the revenue officials in the Madras Presidency articulated for the protection of communal rights of the people in forests. Akhileshwar Pathak, on the other hand, demonstrates how the hostile relationship between the Governments of Madras and Calcutta were responsible for a prolonged debate on the communal rights in the forests in the Madras Presidency.[4] These

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Satpal Sangwan, Making of Popular Debate: The Indian Forester and Emerging Agenda of the State Forestry in India, 1875-1904, *Indian Economic and Social History Review* (hereafter *IESHR*), Vol. 36, No. 2, April-June, 1999, pp. 1265-1273; Mahesh Rangarajan, Imperial Agenda and India's Forests: The Early History of Indian Forestry, 1800-1878, *IESHR*, Vol. 31, No. 2, April-June, 1994, pp. 147-167.

Ramachandra Guha, Early Environmental Debate: The Making of the 1878 Forest Act, *IESHR*, Vol. 27, No. 1-4, January-June, 1993, pp. 65-84.

[4] Akhileshwar Pathak, *Law, Strategies, Ideologies: Legislating Forests in Colonial India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press (hereafter OUP), 2002.

studies highlight the heterogeneous nature of the debates on the forest legislation within the colonial bureaucracy. Within this debate, one finds a contrary articulation of perspectives: at one level, they argued for the protection of peoples' rights in forests; at the other, there was a strong advocacy for the monopolistic control of the state over the forests in India. By the way of extending this argument, the present chapter demonstrates the factors that have fashioned the discourse on the forest legislation in the Madras Presidency.

There are four important factors responsible for the emergence of legal debates and discourses related to the forest policies in the Madras Presidency: one, massive wood consumption by the shipbuilding, railways and the other government departments; two, the phenomenal agricultural expansion that had converted most of the forests and village common lands into cultivated fields; third, population increase and its pressure on the forest resources[6] and the fourth factors was the wood and other requirements from the forest resources for the colonial state. These factors in a way, created pressure on the forest resource base and compelled the colonial state to formulate administrative and legal interventions for the management of the forests in the Presidency. It was in this context that the legal ideas and debates on the forest legislation were pronounced in the Madras Presidency.

The Land Revenue Policy of the Indian Government, Sai Satya Publications, (Reprint Edition) Delhi, Second Edition, 1986, first published in 1902, Government Press, Calcutta, p. 208. This book shows how due to the commercialisation of agriculture and improved irrigation facilities massive agrarian expansion had taken place in the Madras Presidency. For instance, in 1851 the area under cultivation was 1,24,00,000 acres, which by 1891 had increased to 2,09,00,000 acres. Dharma Kumar estimated that between the period 1856 and 72, the cultivated land under the ryotwari system had increased 50 % faster than population growth. Dharma Kumar (ed), *The Cambridge Economic History of India, 1757-2003*, Vol. II, Orient Longman, Expanded Version, New Delhi, 2003, p. 231. These works demonstrate the pressure on land for agriculture expansion in the Madras Presidency.

Sumit Guha, "Claims on the Commons: Political Power and Natural Resources in Pre-Colonial India", in Sanjay Subrahmanyam (ed), *Land, Politics and Trade in South Asia*, OUP, Delhi, 2004, pp. 82-99. Kavita Philip, *Civilising Natures: Race, Resources and Modernity in Colonial South India*, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 2003. These studies argue that in the early British rule, demand for forest resources from the native population has increased gradually.

After realising the commercial potential of forest resources, the colonial state initiated the administrative measures for the conservation and exploitation of forest resources at all India level The administrative establishments for management of forests were created in various provinces in the flowing years Punjab in 1855 Madras in 1856 North West provinces in 1860 Central Provinces in 1861, Oudh in 1861 Coorg in 1864 Bengal in 1864 and Berar in 1865[7] Initially the British forest policies were confined to the exploitation of valuable timber trees with an elaborate and effective system of control over the forest resources in India

While commenting on the intervention by the colonial state in the management of forest resource some of the forest officials pointed out that the evolution of state forestry was a natural process happens in any country They argued that the British Government initiated the forest conservation measures to save the Indian forests from the destructive practices of the natives[8] Thus the state monopolistic control on the forest resources in India was justified with the rhetoric of the conservation as a global phenomenon F A Lodge a forest officer from Hyderabad, described the evolution of the state forestry in the flowing lines

> Starting with a forest clad country, we have first the state in which the destruction of forests is encouraged in order to open up the country during this stage the cultivator obtains free wood leaves grazing and other forest products etc free of charge and free of control next comes to the stage when the rapid clearance of forests

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D Brandis *Memorandum on the Forest Legislation Proposed for British India other than the Presidencies of Madras and Bombay* Government Press Simla 1875 Brethold Ribbentrop *Forestry in British India* first Published in 1900 Government Press Calcutta Reprint by Indus Publishing House New Delhi 1989 p 77

[8] Captain Wood Roads and Fire Conservancy in D Brandis (ed) *Report of the Proceedings of the Forest Conference* Simla 1875 pp 13 14 B H Baden Powell Forest Legislation and the Defects of the Existing Law in *Forest Conference* held in Allahabad

causes alarm in the mind of Government which takes steps to prevent further destruction and to from a forest estate by reserving certain forests areas by this time the cultivator has became so used to getting free wood grazing etc , that he considers that he has a right to it a compromise is arrived at by leaving a certain area of forest unreserved in order to meet the demand of the cultivators and by regulating these demand by means of free grants [sic] The third stage shows the reserve forests brought under regular management, the growing and harvesting of the forest crop receiving as much attention as that of any other crop while the growth on the unreserved areas gradually disappears and the cultivators gradually learn to pay for the wood they require to provide pasture or food for their cattle at their own expense During this stage free grants gradually disappear

In fourth and last stage is the natural development of the third stage no unreserved forests are left the reserved forests are supplying annually as much wood, etc as they can produce, and the cultivator has realised that he has no claim over these forests and has learned to pay for his forest material just as he does for his clothes and all his other requirements [9]

Though the above mentioned passage was written after the promulgation of the forest acts in the British India, it points to a process that was initiated by the colonial state, which was mainly aimed at commercialisation of forest resources with the policy of exclusion of people from accessing forests This observation also points to the active advocacy of the colonial forest bureaucracy in favor of the state intervention in the management of the forests in India

After 1858 at an all India level the colonial state reoriented its policies under the rhetoric of public welfare The administrative structures of the various government departments were brought under the systematised rule of law Under the Crown regime the Indian policy affairs were decided at three levels i e the Secretary of State in Britain the Viceroy heading the Government of India and the Provincial Governments headed by Governors Tirthankar Roy points out that due to different priorities and interests these

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[9] F A Lodge *Notes on Forest Policy and Forest Management* Government Press Hyderabad 1915 p 15

three levels of governance had frequently experienced conflicts over policy matters [10] Some of the provinces frequently quarreled with the Government of India on the resource allocation and administrative responsibilities The prolonged disagreement between the Governments of India and Madras on the forest legislation in the Madras Presidency represents an example of this conflict

After the 1860s the colonial state attempted to acquire control over the forest resources in India not only to meet the wood supplies for the railways and various other government departments but also to generate revenue from forest resources The first step in this direction was promulgation of the Forest Act of 1865 [11] This Act initiated a new legal and administrative regime in the forest management system in India It was the first attempt in the legalisation and bureaucratisation of the forest landscape to meet the timber requirements of the colonial state in India The preamble of the Forest Act of 1865 pronounced that Wherever it is expedient that rules having the force of law should be made from time to time for the better management and preservation of forests wherein rights are vested in her Majesty for the purpose of the Government of India [1] Thus the Forest Act of 1865 provided the legal sanction to the forest administration in the various provinces under the British rule and empowered the colonial state to acquire monopolistic control over the Indian forests The rules proposed by the Forest Act of 1865 facilitated the colonial state monopolistic control over forests with legal and administrative powers Some of the important rules that were proposed in the Forest Act of 1865 were as follows

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Tirthankar Roy *The Economic History of India 1857 1947* OUP New Delhi 2000 p 247
B Ribbentrop *Forestry in British India* pp 97 98
E P Stebbing *The Forests of India* John Lane the Bodley Head limited London 1922 Vol II p 8

Rule Proposed in the Forest Act of 1865

Rule No	Details
1	Defined the word Government Forests as a land covered with trees brushwood or jungle
2	Empowered the provincial governments to formulate rules according to their local conditions for declaring forests as government property
3	Proposed the regulations for management of the government forests in various provinces
4	Laid down an elaborative administrative structure for management and policing forests and regulations on the peoples access to forests Provincial governments were given autonomy to formulate rules suitable for local conditions
5	Penalty and punishment procedure was proposed and provinces were given autonomy in prescribing the amount of the penalty to be imposed for infringement of forest rules The amount prescribed in the Forest Act of 1865 was not exceeding five hundred rupees or the punishment prescribed under the sixty seventh section of the Indian Penal Code
6	Instructed the provincial governments to publish the penalties mentioned in the rule five in the official gazetteer
7	Empowered the forest officers to confiscate the forest products that were stolen by the people in reserve forests and impose penalties and punishments
8	Empowered any Police and Forest Officer to arrest any person for the infringement of the rules mentioned in the Forest Act of 1865
9	Laid down the procedure for trial of cases booked by forest officers against the person for infringement of forest rules
10	It mentioned the punishments mechanism for the entry of people into reserve forests without permission
11	Proposed the procedure for confiscation of the forest products by people without prior permission in reserve forests
12	Deals with the punishments and penalties for the Forest and Police officers who unnecessarily arrest people and create troubles An amount not more than five hundred rupees was prescribed as penalty on them

13	Laid down the judicial procedure for the punishments made under the Forest Act of 1865
14	Empowered the local courts to issue warrant for arrest of any person for infringement of forest rules
15	Empowered the provincial governments prepare rules for penalties and punishments
16	Mentioned the appealing procedure for persons who were convicted by lower courts for breaching forest rules A period of one month was give for them to appeal in district courts
17	Pronounced that "This act shall extend to all the Territories under the immediate administration of the Government of India and under the Governments of Bengal, the North-Western Provinces and the Punjab, and its shall be lawful for Governors in Council of Madras and Bombay respectively by notification in the Official Gazette to extend this Act to the territories under their respective Governments [13]

Sources E P Stebbing The Forests of India John Lane the Bodley Head limited London 1922, Vol 11, pp 9-13

The Forest Act of 1865 was formulated to acquire monopolistic control over the forests in India It has not only imposed the control of state over forests but also proposed a strict punishments and penalties mechanism for regulation of peoples' access to forests Thus the colonial state redefined the forest landscape as state property to be policed by systematic legal and administrative mechanisms by excluding the peoples traditional access to forests

One of the important features of the Forest Act of 1865 was that it categorised the Indian forest landscape into reserved forests and unreserved forests Under this scheme reserved forests were declared as state property wherein peoples access was prohibited In

[13] *Ibid* pp 8 12

unreserved forests, people were allowed to access forest produce with certain restrictions [14] The object of this categorisation was to impose state monopoly on the forest resources in India

The system of reservation of forest tracts as permanent state estates was justified on the ground that the forests in India were the property of the state in the pre colonial period and the colonial state has been following the Indian historical tradition It was argued that the British inherited the ownership right on forests from the preceding rulers in India While addressing this issue, B Ribbentrop, who served as the Inspector General of Forests in India argued that

> The despot preceding the British government allowed every one to take what he required but reserved to himself full power to do at any moment with his property whatever he liked let or hindrance Nobody thought of opposing in this respect But though the Oriental governments from which the British government inherited its forests property, never recognised a prescriptive right, it had to be admitted that, under the system originally in vogue and which had remained entirely unchecked for some time after the British occupation rights of user had in some instances been acquired by the legal process of prescription, in consequence of the substitution or at least intermixture of Western laws and ideas in cases where it had been exercised neither by force nor secretly but fully openly and unchecked for 62 years In some cases rights of user had been acquired by grant and sanad and in others the officers in charge of the more early settlements gave up the right of the soil to the villages and reserved to the State only the trees growing on the land [15]

The dominant perception of the forest officials on the nature of forest property in India was linked to the notion of the Oriental despotism, under which all the lands belonged to the king B Ribbentrop argued that the British Government inherited the

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[14] *Ibid* p 12

[15] B Ribbentrop, *Forestry in British India*, p 97

property right in forests and waste lands from the pre-colonial rulers Even Baden Powell put forward a similar argument " In old days, native rulers used often to set aside considerable areas of forest land as Shikarighar or hunting grounds and these would be usually covered with thick and perhaps valuable forests Such lands have now become the property of the British government following the principle of succession [6] He argued that the pre-colonial states in India exercised monopoly rights on the forests and waste lands Commenting on the nature of the state intervention in the management of the forests the pre-colonial India Baden-Powell felt that There never was a time when the government could not issue an edict reserving certain valuable trees-- teak sandal, black wood and others-- as royal trees nor any time when the chieftain of the province would have hesitated to enclose off a large area of the waste as a hunting preserve [17]

Thus, the colonial bureaucracy selectively deployed the instances from Indian history where the rulers in the pre-colonial period intervened in the management of forest resources However, the Forest Act of 1865 had initiated a new chapter in the history of the forest management in India Most of the provinces under the British rule accepted this Act and formulated local forest rules using its framework The rules that were put into operation were the British Burma Rules of 1865 the Central Province Rules of 1865 the Rawalpindi Rules of 1865 the North Western Province Rules of 1866 the Oudh Rules of 1866 the Berar Rules of 1871 and the Coorg and Bengal Rules of 1871 [18]

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[16] B H Baden Powell *A Manuel of Jurisprudence for Forest Officers Being a Treatise on the Forest Law* Government Press Calcutta 1882 p 47

[17] *Ibid* p 89

[18] B Ribbentrop *Forestry in British India* pp 97 98

Though most of the provinces under the British rule had accepted the Forest Act of 1865 the Madras Government opposed its extension to the Madras Presidency as the Board of Revenue and revenue officials opposed the implementation of the Act in the Madras Presidency on the ground that it would negatively affect the communal rights and privileges of people

In the Madras Presidency the forest administration was a contested issue between the Forest and Revenue departments Prior to the creation of the Forest department all forests and waste lands were controlled by the Revenue department and the income from the forests resources was credited under the Land Revenue department After establishment of the Forest department in 1856 the Madras Government initiated a dual organization for the management of the forests in the Presidency Under this scheme while the natural and dense forests were managed by the Forest department under the imperial head the village jungles and waste lands were kept under the supervision of the revenue authorities[5] While the income of the Forest department was credited under the imperial budget the revenue from the Jungle conservancy was credited to the account of the provincial government[6] The Government of India constantly insisted on the Madras Government to follow a systematic policy to increase the revenue from forests But the Madras Government not only rejected Forest Act of 1865 but also remained reluctant in undertaking conservation measures with the view that it may loose revenue from the Jungle Conservancy fund This situation resulted in the conflict between the Governments of Madras and India on the issue of formulating a forest legislation that should be adopted in the Madras Presidency As

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C D MacLean *Manual of the Administration of the Madras Presidency* Vol II Asian Educational Service Delhi 1985 p 315

Board of Revenue (hereafter BOR) Circular Order No 5497 27th November 1860 in Board of Revenue Proceedings (hereafter BORP) 18th July 1863 No 4414 pp 4179 4186

result of this conflict there existed a rigorous debate on the forest legislation suitable for the Presidency

After 1860s administrative establishments were created in all districts of the Madras Presidency By doing so the Madras Government attempted to acquire effective control on forests It instructed the Conservator of Forests to prepare a Code for the Forest department in 1862[21] R H Beddome the Conservator of Forests prepared the Code to provide a systematic shape to the forest administration Some of the important rules that were mentioned in the code are mentioned in the following table

Rules proposed in the Madras Code of 1862

Rule No	Details
1	It proposed a list of the reserved timber trees and prescribed the *seignioriage* to be paid by people for accessing them
2	Proposed regulations on felling of reserved trees by people
3	Laid down the procedure for application by people for obtaining timber from the government forests
4	Imposed the *seignioriage* of Rs 1 per 2 bullock carts on the unreserved wood from government forests
5	Permitted the villagers to collect fire wood only on head loads from the government forests without any tax
6	Imposed tax on fire-wood collection by fire wood sellers
7	Proposed the procedure for formation of village topes to be managed by *ryots*
8	Proposed that any one found felling or removing teak sapling in the government forests will be punished under the Section 378 of the Penal Code

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Government Order (Hear after referred as G O) No 2645 20th December 1862 in BORP 16th March 1863 No 1567 p 1

9	Permitted people to cut the unreserved timber at free of charge for making agricultural implements
10	Imposed the *seigniorage* of four annas for bullock loads three anans for donkey load and 2 annas for head load on unreserved wood from the government forests
11	Proposed *seigniorage* on bamboos collected by people in the government
12	forests
13	Prohibits the charcoal burning in all government forests
14	License and Voucher system was proposed to sell wood from the government forests to people
15	Proposed the procedure under which timber to be felled by people after paying license from the government forests
	Prohibits the felling of trees nearby streams and on mountains for protecting water streams [22]

Source Board of Revenue Proceedings, 16th March 1863, No 1567 p 1693

The Madras Forest Code of 1862 empowered the Forest department to acquire monopolistic control on certain timber trees that were reserved by the government The forests in the plain areas were remained under the control of the Revenue department During this period the operations of the Forest department were mainly confined to the conservation of teak and fire wood plantations The Government of India on its part proposed to bring all forests in the Madras Presidency under the supervision of the Forest department to generate revenue In this context the Government of India insisted upon the Madras Government to implement the Forest Act of 1865 in the Madras Presidency However most of the revenue officials and the Board of Revenue opposed this Act on the

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Letter from the Conservator of Forests to the Secretary to the BOR 30th December 1862 No 2329 in BORP 16th March 1863 No 1567 p 1693

ground that it would negatively affect the communal rights of people in the Madras Presidency.

In 1865, a communication was dispatched by the Secretary of State for India to the Madras Government on the implementation of the Forest Act of 1865 in the Madras Presidency. This correspondence was circulated by the Board of Revenue to the District Collectors.[23] The responses from some of the District Collectors reveal a strong opposition of the revenue officials to the proposed new forest policies in the Presidency. For instance, the Collector of South Arcot District felt that the rules proposed in the Forest Act of 1865 though appear to be good, but he cautioned that they should be implemented after a careful examination of their possible implication on the communal rights exercised by the people in the forests of the Madras Presidency.[24]

The Coimbatore District Collector, while commenting on the Forest Act of 1865, felt that it gave immense power to the forest officers, who may misuse and trouble people. He argued that the Act was suitable for the management of uninhabited forests that existed in Burma and Bengal regions. He pointed out that the dense forest tracts did not exist in the Coimbatore district and all the minor forests that existed were accessed by the villagers for minor products. In opposing the introduction of Forest Act of 1865 in the Madras Presidency, he argued that it may lead to hardship and unnecessary irritation to the public.[25] Similar views were expressed by most of the District Collectors. Another concern of the

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Resolution by BOR, dt. 25th Oct. 1866, No. 7712, in BORP, 8th Feb. 1867, No. 786, pp. 674-75. This correspondence consists of some of the District Collector's response on the applicability of the Forest Act of 1865 in the Madras Presidency.

Letter from the Collector of South Arcot District to the Secretary to the BOR, January 1867, No. 26, *Ibid*, pp. 674-75.

Letter from the Collector of Coimbatore District, to the Secretary to the BOR, 2nd Feb. 1867, No. 38, in BORP, 13th February 1867, No. 866, pp. 745-6.

revenue department was that the new forest rules were brought with a view to empower the Forest department to occupy the waste lands This they feared would restrict their supremacy in land management system for till then it was the Revenue department and the District Collectors who had a free hand in land management

Thus, majority of the revenue officials argued that forest legislation with elaborate powers was not required for the Madras Presidency The North Arcot Collector opposing the implementation of the Forest Act of 1865 in the Presidency felt that its implementation would deprive the people of their communal rights that were traditionally exercised in the forests in the Madras Presidency He argued that the imposition of the Forest department s control over the forests in Madras may create unnecessary troubles to people He advocated that no forest legislation could be implemented in the Madras Presidency unless it respects communal right of the people over forests The Collector of North Arcot District argued that the forest administration under the Revenue department was professional enough to carry out the forest conservation and there was no need for special legislation in the Madras Presidency [26]

Most of the revenue officials in the Madras Presidency however seem to have articulated in favor of the communal rights of people in order to oppose the expansion of the Forest department s powers into their domain of operation They opposed the forest legislation pointing out that it may negatively interfere in day-to day lives of the people leading to confrontation between the government and people The Board of Revenue

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Letter from the Collector of the North Arcot District to the Secretary BOR 14[1] Nov 1866 No 334 in BORP 23 [1] November 1866 No 8465 pp 7263 64

endorsed the majority of the Collectors opposition and commented on the Forest Act of 1865 as the following lines

> The application of the Act is quite unnecessary inasmuch as the penal code already provides for offences of every description under the heads of mischief trespass and theft, and it is highly inexpedient to multiply the legislation of a special nature and especially so, to create offences by rules which may be varied at the will of the executive The Act will in no way facilitate conservancy and no forests can be brought within the scope of it which is not absolutely the property of the government free from rights of very kind, for Section 2 specially enacts that its application shall not abridge or affect any existing rights All the jungles and forests of this Presidency are within village boundaries, and the people residing in or near them have from time immemorial, had the right to take leaves for manure, firewood for their own use and timber for agricultural purposes to grase their cattle at certain periods [27]

In opposition to the Forest Act of 1865 the Board of Revenue argued that the forest tracts in the plain districts should not be given to the management of the Forest department Since it felt that the waste and forest lands should be managed by the Land revenue department, it came with the argument that there was no need for a forest act in the Madras Presidency It pointed out that the reclamation of the land from a state of nature (forests) to food production (agriculture) has an unquestionable advantage than giving it for plantation purposes to the Forest department This argument was made in the context of broader policy under which the land revenue and agrarian expansion were prioritised over the forest conservancy in the Madras Presidency The Board of Revenue while criticising the Forest Act of 1865 argued that A very large proportion of the so called forests of this Presidency are in truth, merely jungles with villages scattered through them rights of way in all directions and privileges existing of various kinds, and it is impossible to introduce

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BORP 16 April 1868 No 2777 cited in E P Stebbing *The Forests of India* Vol II pp 14 15

into such tracts the stringent system of conservancy practicable in countries like Burma (which the formers of the act doubtless had in view) without exciting much popular discontent and incurring serious risk of oppression [28]

While commenting on the nature of the government property rights in forests the Board of Revenue argued that It must be remembered that until quite recently except in the Anaimalais and few other localities the people were free to cut what wood they pleased, to grase their cattle and to exercise common rights without let or hindrance It is but just therefore, that the fact of these rights being withdrawn should be made known by proper notification by demarcation and by some effectual means of fencing where the forests surrounds a village and its cultivation [29] Thus the Board of Revenue in its opposition to the implementation of the Forest Act of 1865 articulated its concern for common people on the ground that this new forest Act would tamper the communal rights of people in forests which would deprive the livelihood of people in Madras It argued that the regulations on the peoples' access to forests may leads to severe discontent and create troubles for the government machinery

Despite this strong opposition from the Revenue department the forest officials continued to make efforts to acquire control on the forest management in the Madras Presidency In 1868, R H Beddome the Conservator of Forests proposed that the valuable forest tracts should be given to the Forest department for careful management On the forests in South Canara district R H Beddome proposed that

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[8] *Ibid* p 16
Ibid p 16

> The firewood tracts of this district are of great value and I am of opinion that they should be under the special department with a regular organised establishment When they were lately handed over to the Revenue authorities the services of several Daffadars etc , were dispensed with but if our department resumed charge a proper establishments might be at once organised If under the Revenue authorities there are two separate establishments working for one object in the same district which must cause jealousy and clashing If the Collector happens to take special interest in the forests and is not constantly through the jungle our department officers are obliged to be the whole supervision is left to the native Revenue authorities and they entire embark in timer trade themselves, or make a large profit by winking at smuggling and the non-observances of conservancy regulations [30]

Thus the forest officials constantly argued that the management of forests should be handed over to the Forest department for exclusive control In contrast to this proposal Mr Thomas the Collector of the South Canara District proposes that

> Timber trees have disappeared from all those lands that were under the general protection of Government aided by its Collectors Magistrates Forests, and Public Works Departments, and have remained only where they have enjoyed the individual care of the cultivator is in itself an unimpeachable evidence who are the best guardians and growers of timber trees If the ryots have taken such effectual care of them when they had only a preferential rights to them on a fixed seigniorage, and were unable to protect from the inroads of cattle by anything better than a temporary thorn hedge that was generally admitted by sufferance and that required constant watching and renewal much more may they be expected thoroughly by to care for them when they are granted a full property in them and the liberty to enclose with a substantial mud wall [31]

While the forest officials favored the state ownership on forest lands and the revenue officials preferred on the creation of customary tenure rights to communities over forests for they were considered to be the best custodians of the trees While writing on the *Kumaki* (common lands) forest lands in South Canara district Mr Robinson member of

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[30] Letter from R H Beddome the Conservator of Forests to the Secretary to BOR 13th July 1868 No 816 in BORP 21st March 1871 No 1222 p 1899

[31] Letter from the Collector of South Canara District to the Secretary to the BOR 5th September 1866 No 827 in the BORP March 21st 1871 p 1904

the Board of Revenue advised the Madras Government that My advice to the Board is to obtain from Government a full and distinct ratification of all rights and immunities in respect to so-called *Kumaki*-land at least to advise the Government to withdraw so called Government Conservancy- which appears now to consist in selling off the old preserved woods of the people from such private properties '[32]

Despite strong opposition from the revenue officials, the forest officials continued to insist on the need for the forest legislation that would empower them in acquiring control over the forests in the Madras Presidency While describing the situation in the absence of a forest act, the Conservator of Forests argued that We have in fact no standing, and none of our officers or magisterial authorities know exactly on what footing we stand It has been therefore considered that how far the Act or some special legislation is necessary to settle these points Unless they are settled and unless our forest rules are to be acted upon to the Forest department in this Presidency can not be expected to show results in compression with other countries '[33]

The resistance from the Board of Revenue and its officials to the Forest Act of 1865 and its implementation in the Madras Presidency convinced the Madras Government to take a contrary decision from that of the Government of India It argued that We have given the papers at most careful considerations and are of opinion that the introduction of the forest Act in the Madras Presidency is uncalled for at present and would be

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Minute by W Robinson in BORP March 21st 1871 p 1990

Letter from the Conservator of Forests to the Secretary to the BOR 11th March 1869 No 1243 in BORP 8th June 1869 Vol 3 No 4105 pp 4491 9

inexpedient The tenure of land in southern-India differs vastly from that of those portions of the continent where the Act is said to have been introduced with success' [34]

As the Forest Act of 1865 was unable to provide a systematic legal framework for reservation of forests as state property the Government of India instructed Dr Brandis to formulate a more effective legal mechanism He prepared a Forest Draft Bill that was circulated among all provinces This Bill was dispatched to the Madres Government for its consideration, in 1869 [35] It circulated the Draft Bill to all the District Collectors and sought their opinion on the possibility of its implementation In 1871, the responses from Collectors on the Draft Bill were published in the Board of Revenue Proceedings The opinions expressed by the revenue officials demonstrate the nature of conflict between the Forest and Revenue departments on acquiring control over the management of forests This debate was centered on the issue of how to treat the communal rights and privileges of people in forests in the Madras Presidency [6]

Majority of the revenue officials opposed the Draft Bill prepared by Dr Brandis and argued that it would deprive the livelihoods of the people in the forests by restricting their customary access to the resources The Kistna District Collector argued that since most of the forests and waste lands were brought under the cultivation the implementation of forest reservation as proposed in the Draft Bill would not be possible in his district [7] The demand to reclaim the forests and waste lands for extension of agriculture in the plain areas of the

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[4] E P Stebbing *Forests of India* Vol II p 17

[5] B Ribbentrop *Forestry in British India* p 98

[6] Proceedings of Madras Government in BORP 5 August 1871 No 3284 This proceeding consisted of the Collectors responses on the Draft Bill prepared by D Brandis

[7] Letter from the Collector of Kistna District 11th November 1870 No 4886 in BORP 23 August 1871 No 3644 p 6309

Madras Presidency was on the rise throughout the 19th century It was this process that influenced the thinking of the plain District Collectors The opposition to the forest legislation was therefore due to the fear that it may result in greater and monopolistic exercise of control on forests and waste lands and create hurdles for the expansion of agriculture in the plain areas in Madras

The main argument advocated in opposition to the Draft Bill papered by Dr Brandis by most of the revenue officials in Madras was that state should not intervene in peoples' customary rights to access forest tracts While critising the Draft Bill, the Collector of Vizagapatam District argued that the section 17 of the Draft Bill aimed at curtailing the rights of village communities over the forests in the Madras Presidency He felt that the sections 64 and 65 of the Draft Bill empower the forest and police officers to punish people for infringement of forest rules The infringement of forest rules may out of necessity and misfortune and not with any criminal intention such violations were always considered as crimes by the Forest department He expressed apprehension that implementation of forest act may create troubles to the people in the Madras Presidency [38] Though these narratives reflect local peoples' forest usage pattern of people to a large extent rooted in the prejudice of the revenue officials against the Forest department

After 1870s, the process of reservation of forests as state property was undertaken by some of the provinces under British India This process remained slow in the Madras Presidency due to the fact that the majority of the revenue official and the Board of Revenue opposed the forest reservation with the argument that unless the issue of

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Letter from the Collector of Vizagapatam District to the Secretary to the BOR 28th April 1871 No 337 in BORP 5th August 1871 No 3284 p 5739

communal rights be settled, the government cannot undertake the forest reservation The Sub Collector of Nellore District argued that the notion of forests and waste lands belonged to state was not applicable in the Madras Presidency He felt that the pattern of forest reservation, proposed in the Draft Bill deprives the communal rights enjoyed by people in forests While describing the nature of the forest tenure in the Madras Presidency, he wrote that ... There was originally no government forests existed in this country in fact forests have always been of natural growth here and so they have been enjoyed by the people [39] It was this argument that was articulated by most of the revenue officials in opposition to the Draft Bill prepared by Dr Brandis For them, the forest legislation proposed to be implemented in the Madras Presidency should recognise the communal rights of people in forests To quote the Sub Collector Nellore District " ... Government may define and regulate, but they cannot disregard and ignore the communal and immemorial rights of the villagers throughout the country [40]

Thus, majority of the District Collectors argued that a separate legal establishment for the management of the forest resources in the Madras Presidency was not required Commenting on the possible implications of the forest conservation, the Deputy Collector of Nellore District wrote that

> Though this country is naturally rich with forests the enormous increase of late in population and the new civilised uses to which fuel and timber have put in the working of new applications have created to some extent a comparative artificial wants of forest produce, and this is no doubt a good ground for a project of conservancy and reserving jungle but the laboring poor and the cattle of the country have all along lived on jungle and it is the

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[39] Memorandum on the Forest Bill Deputy Collector of Nellore District to the Collector 8 May 1871 in *Ibid* p 5742

[40] *Ibid*

> preservation of their interests that requires an adequate consideration in legalizing on the matter Dismantled forest may recover, new ones planted and exhausted ones abounded, but none of these steps could extinguish for a payment or not, the long enjoyed prescriptive rights of the people [41]

At one level the Deputy Collector of Nellore District recognises the necessity of forest conservation but argues that such conservation should not trample upon the prescriptive rights of people The point to be noted here is that the articulation in favor of the communal rights was mainly by the District Collectors in the plain areas where the forest tracts situated nearby to the cultivated lands and habitation sites The revenue officials opposed the forest conservation policies mainly for three reasons one in the Madras Presidency most of the forests and grazing grounds in the plain districts were situated adjacent to the cultivated lands in which revenue establishment had exercised authority, second, in the plain areas, the granting of the *pattas* on forests and waste lands for extension of cultivation was considered to be a more productive activity than handing over to the Forest department for plantation purposes and the third factor was that the revenue officials wanted to acquire more controlling powers to maintain dominant position in the forest administration These three factors influenced discourse on the forest legislation by the revenue officials in the Madras Presidency

Mr Venkkatachalla Pontulu the Deputy Collector of Bellary District criticised the Draft Bill and wrote that '. It appears to me that this bill was prepared for the sole purpose of the Government acquiring rights in forests other than Government ones and of enlarging the powers of Forest officers without regard to the rights of others' [42] He argued

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[41] *Ibid*

[42] Letter from the Deputy Collector of Bellary District 27th June 1871 No 186 in *Ibid* p 5744

that the Draft Bill aimed at empowering the state to acquire property rights over forests He emphasised that the forests in the Madras Presidency were the common property of villagers He argued that As it is a known fact that all the jungles in this part of country are the common property of the people and that the poor persons who live near them enjoy their produce from immemorial time [43] Thus, the native revenue officials have argued that the forests in the Madras Presidency were managed by the village communities from time immemorial and imposition of state control on forests may lead to deprivation of peoples' livelihood in the Presidency

For the Collector of Cuddapah District however both state and village communities do not have absolute authority over the forest tracts in the Cuddapah district While describing the nature of peoples' access to forests, he wrote that There none in which the property rights of Government is absolute, nor any belonging to village or other communities, public institutions private individuals, or other persons In all existing jungles the right of Government on certain and to all large timber is clearly recognised by the people who on their part have certain communal rights never very celery defined but which have existed from time immemorial [44] It was argued that the government had exercised the right only on certain tree species while for generations the villagers were accustomed to get forest products from neighboring forests The conception of the communal rights envisaged by the revenue an official was that of the long standing usage by villagers in the neighboring forest tracts Therefore, they argued that in the plain areas

[43] *Ibid*, p 5745
[44] Correspondence from the Cuddapah District Collector, to the Secretary BOR 26th May 1871 No 111 *Ibid*, p 5748

the forest conservation should confine to conservation of trees while allowing the villagers to exercise the communal rights in the common and waste lands

Majority of the revenue officials opposed the Draft Bill prepared by Dr Brandis for it was felt that there was no need for an elaborate organisation for the management of forests in the Madras Presidency and avoid an unnecessary interference into the day to day life of the native people This has been the consistent argument of the revenue officials in articulating their opposition to the forest policies in the Madras Presidency While commenting on the nature of the communal rights, the Collector of Kurnool District wrote that The forests in this district I may say of this Presidency, are all forests in which the right of Government is limited by the customary privileges of village communities and hill tribes [45] For him the government rights in the forests in the Kurnool district were limited by the long standing rights in forests exercised by people While describing the nature of the forest usage pattern in the Kurnool district he wrote that ' In this district many of these privileges, particularly the pasturing of cattle, the gathering of leaves for manure and cutting of firewood for domestic purpose and for sale, have been enjoyed from time immemorial both by the villagers in immediate neighborhood of the forests and also by all the villages throughout the district [46]

While commenting on sections 19 to 22 in the proposed Draft Bill the Collector of the Kurnool District argued that the proposed forest reservation pattern could not be carried out in the Madras Presidency due to the communal rights of people He also criticised the sections 24 and 25 of the Draft Bill which empowered the Conservator of Forests to close

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[45] *Ibid.*

[46] Letter from the Collector of Kurnool District to the Secretary to the BOR 27[th] May 1871 No 177 in BORP *Ibid* p 5751

any forest tract as a state reserved forest He reasoned that if the *Nallamala* forests were to be closed for peoples' access, they would be compelled to go more than 30 to 40 miles to procure leaves for manure and pasture for cattle.[47]

Similarly the Collector of Kurnool District argued that if the Draft Bill sent by the Government of India were to be made into a legislation it would lead to deprivation of peoples' rights and interests in forests. He wrote that '... The present bill with its numerous privileges is not necessary, a short enactment that legalising the punishment of smuggling and mischief and the confiscation of smuggled wood is all I think, that is necessary for the preservation of government interests in the forests of this Presidency.'[48] He advocated for limited interference of the forest rules in plain areas and suggested that forest conservation should confine to the conservation of reserved tree species

The opposition articulated by the revenue officials to the Draft Bill prepared by Dr Brandis emphasised that state cannot abrogate peoples' communal rights by creating the state reserve forests. The Collector of North Arcot District felt that the rules proposed in the Draft Bill were stringent in nature and may curtail peoples' communal rights. He pointed out that '... Now there is not in the whole district a single strip of jungle in which the people have not such communal privileges and in which they claim fairly more then seigniorial rights.'[49]

Some of the revenue officials also advanced that the forest usage pattern in the Madras Presidency existed not in the form of user rights but people certainly had property

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[47] *Ibid* p 5752

[48] *Ibid* p 5754

[49] Letter from the Collector of North Arcot to the Secretary to the BOR 19[th] May 1871, No 285 in *Ibid* p 5755

rights in forests. The Collector of North Arcot argued that in dry districts like North Arcot strict forest rules could not be implemented. The main reason according to him was that

'In a dry open county like that of North Arcot any measure which circumscribes the rights of pasturage must fell [sic] mischievously on the interests of husbandry and very seriously affect the comfort and welfare of the people. The more populous and highly cultivated parts of district leave always exercised the rights of pasturing their cattle in the boarder forests and hill sloops at certain sessions when fodder fails near home. Agricultural enterprise has not yet turned itself to the production of green meat for cattle'.[50]

The Draft Bill prepared by Dr. Brandis proposed to categorised the forest landscape in India into three categories, one absolutely reserved forests, where the government had complete authority, second, protected forests, where the government had authority but people were allowed to exercise restricted rights under the regulation of the Forest department and third, was the village or communal forests, where the people were allowed to exercise communal rights.[51] This was a first major attempt in categorising the forest landscape in India to separate the rights of state and people. Under this scheme, while the reserved forests were proposed as state property, for people's requirements, village forests category was suggested.

The main reason for the revenue officials' opposition on the Draft Bill was that it did not recognise the powers of the Revenue department in forest management. While criticising the Draft Bill, the Collector of Tanjore District argued that '... the Bill totally ignores the agency of the District Revenue authorities in matters connected with the

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Ibid, p. 5756.

Letter from the Collector of South Arcot, to the Acting Secretary to the BOR, 25th May No. 159 in *Ibid*, p. 5760.

settlement of "Forest rights and on which those authorities, from their position, must be the best available judges" [52] This argument shows the attitude of the revenue officials who demanded big share in the forest administration

The Collector of Madura District opposed the idea of formulation of forest legislation for the Madras Presidency and pointed out that 'In most districts I believe there is no occasion for a Forest Department at all with a very small establishment the forests could be managed by the Revenue Department and if not better the management would certainly be more economical and far less harassing to the people [53] Most of the revenue officials argued that an elaborate establishment was not necessary and rather a small revenue establishment was enough for the management of the forest in Madras Thus both the Forest and Revenue departments attempted to acquire control over forest administration and this generated inter-departmental rivalry in the Madras Presidency

The Collector of South Canara District felt that the section 26 of the Draft Bill unfairly proposed the confiscatory powers to the Conservator of Forests [54] He argued that the state did not have the absolute rights in the village jungles where the people from time immemorial were accustomed to collect forest products from neighboring forests He advocated for the limited government interference in the privileges of people in forests

> As far as my experience goes all that required is a short Act defining the different descriptions of forests providing for the demarcation and effectual conservancy of purely state forests and

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[52] Letter from the Collector of Tanjore District to the Secretary to the BOR 15th June 1871 No 185 *Ibid* p 5761

[53] Letter from the Collector of Madura District to the Secretary to the BOR 27th April 1871 No 115 in *Ibid* p 5764

[54] Letter from the Collector of South Canara to the Secretary to the BOR 29th April 1871 No 554 in *Ibid* p 5771

> for the conservancy, subject to the existing rights of village forests and regulating the traffic of timber cut in private forests I don't think it would be necessary to abolish any communal rights of the people all that would be required would be the temporary closing of certain portion of village jungles to allow of planting operation being carried on [55]

However there were some varies of disgust within the revenue administration who advocated the necessity of forest legislation for protecting forests in the Madres Presidency The Collector of Tinnevelly District for instance advocated for a forest legislation to preserve the forests from the rapid agriculture expansion [56]

The Commissioner of Nilgiris also recognised the necessity of forest conservation and advocated for the forest act in the Madras Presidency His reflection on the necessity of forest conservation was

> It cannot be denied, I think that centuries of the agricultural industry have encroached on the natural forests, and in many provinces, denuded the country to an injurious extent
> For climatic and other reasons, I am persuaded on the time has arrived for government in its capacity of a 'Good Landlord' to restore the balance between Wood-lands and Plough-land, by planting large tracts of bare waste and to exercise some effective control over the primeval forests that in place still remain
> The Government can do this by legislative enactment and I am therefore prepared to acquiesce in the necessity of an Act which among other things will define and regulate the various customary forest rights that every where exist and will even impose restrictions *as far as is concerned* upon the liberties and free customs of the poorer class and the hill tribes for the benefit of the general community [57]

Enclosure No 2 Memorandum of Remarks upon Forest Draft Bill Latter from the Collector of South Canara to the Secretary to the BOR 29th April 1871 No 554 *Ibid* p 5776

Letter from the Collector of Tinnevelly to the Secretary to the BOR 18th April 1871 in *Ibid* p 5766

Letter from the Commissioner of Nilgiri District to the Secretary to the BOR 14th April 1871 No 34 in *Ibid* p 5766

However, since the majority of the revenue officials opposed that Draft Bill and argued that it would be not suitable for the Madras Presidency, the Board of Revenue endorsed their argument. The Board of Revenue even criticised the Draft Bill prepared by Dr. Brandis, to quote

> There is scarcely a forest in the whole of the Presidency of Madras which is not within the limits of some village, and there is not one in which, so far as the Board can ascertain, the State asserted any rights of property, unless Royalties in teak, sandal wood, cardamoms and the like can be considered as such, until very recently. All of them, without exception, are subjected to tribal or communal rights which have existed from time immemorial, and which are as difficult to define and value as they are *necessary* to the rural population. It cannot be said the they are limited by village boundaries, or circuits of five miles, or any other limit of distance, for there are jungles, like those in the Palanad, into which whole districts send their cattle to pasture during the dry weather, and everywhere as the drought continues, and the jungles on the lower ranges of the hill became bare, the cattle ascend towards the higher ranges, till the rains fall and they can find pasturage on the plain. Nor can it be said that these rights are susceptible of compensation, for in innumerable cases the right to fell manure and pasturage will be as much as necessity of life to unborn generations as it to the presents [58]

While commenting on the nature of forest tenure in the Madras Presidency, the Board of Revenue pointed out that "Here forests are and always have been common property, no restrictions except that of taxes, like the Moturpha and Pulaari, was ever imposed on the people (sic) prior to the creation the Forest Department and such taxes no more indicate that the forests belong to the State". [59] The Board of Revenue emphasised that the forests in the Madras Presidency were the common property of people and state powers were limited to only to certain timber tree species.

Ibid, p. 777.
Ibid, p. 778.

The main reason for the opposition of the revenue officials on the Draft Bill prepared by the Dr Brandis was that it defined the forests as a "Tract of country covered with trees, brushwood or grass and shall include such waste or cultivated lands roads streams and other waters as may be situated within such tract"[6] This definition was proposed to treat the waste and pasture lands as a legal category of forests to be managed by the exclusive control of Forest department The revenue officials were afraid that promulgation of the Draft Bill into a legal act may empower the Forest department to acquire control on all waste lands in the plain areas of the Madras Presidency Thus the issue of control on the waste and jungles lands sparked the conflict between the Forest and Revenue departments, which led to a prolonged debate on forest tenure in the Madras Presidency This conflict shows how the colonial forest polices have evolved going through different contestations within the colonial bureaucratic structure

In spite of the resistance from the Board of Revenue and its officers the Forest department continued its efforts to acquire control over forests and waste lands in the Madras Presidency In 1872 Mr R H Beddome, the Conservator of Forests proposed that the forests in Malabar and Coimbatore districts should be reserved and given to the Forest department for careful management These proposals were not accepted by the Madras Government[7] Again in 1873, the Conservator of Forests suggested the government to initiate the forest reservation process and define peoples rights in order to prepare systematic conservation schemes He complained that the District Collectors of Caddapah Madura and Tinnevelly were not cooperative in the forest conservation activities However

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[6] Sub Collector of the North Arcot District to the Collector 12th April 1871 No 241 *Ibid* p 5758

[7] Letter from Conservator Forests to the Secretary to the Revenue Department 8th March 1872 in BORP 1st July 1872 No 1452 p 4180

the Government of India continued to exercise pressure on the Madras Government in formulating the forest legislation for better performance of the forest conservation in the Madras Presidency [6]

Though the Madras Government rejected both the Forest Act of 1865 and the Draft Bill of 1869 the Government of India continued to press upon the necessity of the forest legislation in the Madras Presidency. Despite the vehement opposition within the colonial bureaucratic structure on the forest legislation from 1870s onwards there was an explicit concern shown by the colonial state to formulate forest legislation. The possible reason for this continued interest was due to the realisation of the potential of forests as revenue yielding agencies. The immediate fallout of the resistance from the Madras Government to the Forest Act of 1865 and the Draft Bill proposed by Dr. Brandis was that it generated several questions on the forest legislation in India. In order to organise a detailed discussion on forest legislation two forest conferences were organised by the British Government. These conferences provided a platform for the colonial officials to discuss and negotiate various aspects of the forest legislation to be formulated in the British India.

In the conference held at Allahabad Baden Powell acted as an articulate spokesman for the state control over forests and advocated for strict state forestry in India. He proposed the following categorisation for Indian forest landscape to be brought under the forest Law

1) Reserved forests property of the state and people rights were not recognised
2) Protected forests privileges for people were allowed and
3) Private or communal forests created to meet the requirements of people

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[6] Proceedings of Madras Government in BRP 26 July 1872 No 1422 p 4125

Baden Powell argued that all classes of the forests in India were the property of state He proposed that in the reserved forests the state should exercise absolute control and the rights of people cannot be admitted while in the protected and communal forests people were allowed to exercise some privileges [63] The object of this division was to establish the state control over forest tracts and simultaneously grant some concessions to the people in the protected and communal forests Baden Powell argued that peoples traditional access to forests was based on not property rights, rather they were user rights To quote him

> A very large proportion of them are admitted to be the absolute property of State, at any rate in theory The State had not it is true exercised that full right the forest was left open to any one who chose to use it *but the right was there* Every native ruler closed when he chose whole areas of forests to preserve the game and as in the well known instance of the forest of Amirs of Sindh and in other parts punished with the utmost cruelty the slightest trespass within the forest limits Whenever this was not the case people were *in the habit of doing* what they pleased, no one caring to stop them Here then we have forests absolutely the property of the State [64]

The contestation of Baden-Powell was that the forests in India were the absolute property of the state Thus the monopolistic control of state over forests was justified on the ground that the preceding rulers in India exercised monopoly rights in on the forests and those rights were inherited by the British Government Describing the nature of the origin of the forest rights in India Baden-Powell described

> It is not questionable as I have elsewhere fully shown that unoccupied waste in India always belonged to the governing power But for centuries that waste remained largely in excess of the cultivated area and the people from the villages wandered into it at their will and took what they wanted from it no one

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[3] B H Baden Powell and J S Gamble (ed) *Report of the Proceedings of the Forest Conference held in Allahabad* 1873-74 Government Press Calcutta 1874 p 5

[4] *Ibid* p 4

preventing them But the moment the governing power desired to make a grant of the waste to be brought under cultivation, the land was given as an unencumbered grant and the exercise of grazing &c simply had to cease No one would dreamt of such a thing as compensation for the stoppage of the practice of grazing and wood-cutting Those that had cattle simply moved on the next jungle woo-cutters removed to the next hill-side that was all In the same way whenever the monarch wanted a "*shikaragh* or hunting preserve or a place for his stud to graze in, he at once took the land and prohibited any interference with it and often punished with barbarous severity any attempt to trespass or infringe his prohibition Nor did the ruling power hesitate to issue orders which were rally orders for the conservation of the forest in so far as the intelligence of the day understood it [65]

Thus, the some of the colonial officials claimed control over the Indian forests on the ground that the ruling powers in the pre-British period had exercised similar monopoly rights over forests Besides the issue of legitimacy of state control questions that were debated in the Allahabad Conference were the historicity and meaning of the forest rights and privileges While debating the forest rights in the Allahabad conference C F Amery defined the rights as exclusive advantage enjoyed by an individual or community as against all other individuals or communities" [66] This definition narrowed down the scope of the forest rights exercised by the people The people in India have accessed forest products in their neighboring forests without any taxation and during the time of famine or drought they sent their cattle for grazing in available forest tracts.

C F Amery defined the concept of privileges as the voluntary concession on the part of the owners of any portion of their rights for an indefinite period and without specified

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B H Baden-Powell *A Manuel of Jurisprudence for Forest Officers Being a Treatise on the Forest Law* Calcutta 1882 p 113

C I Amery s comments published in the *Report on the Proceedings of the Forest Conference* held at Allahabad p 125

consideration' [67] He conceptualised the privileges and concessions as temporary facilities given by the state for people to utilise the forest resources He was of the opinion that the privileges could be withdrawn by the state at any time For C F Amery therefore the peoples' forest utilisation pattern in India came under privilege category and thus could not be equated with rights It was this definition of privilege that enables the colonial state to bring the forest usage pattern in India under its control

However there were some officials who aware of the importance of the forest landscape for tribal and peasant lives in India Major Kenneth Mackenzie suggested that the forest conservation should confine to the conservation of timber trees and should not deprive the people who depended on forests for survival He advocated that forest conservation should not intervene in the agricultural holdings and people should be allowed to get forest produce for domestic consumption without any restrictions [68] Thus some of the officials did advocate for sympathetic treatment of rights of peoples in forests

There were officials and policy makers who advocated extreme measures For instance Dr Schlich a famous forester in contrast to Kenneth Mackenzie represented an annexationist views and argued for the extensive reservation of forests as state property He argued

> I object radically to the theory of 'reserved' and 'unreserved' forests, *viz* that one lot may be preserved and the other hacked about anyhow
> The reserve forests usually from a small area quite out of proportion to the wants of the country and if the unreserved forests are not also worked on a plain they will be destroyed and the little

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[67] *Ibid* p 126

[68] K Mackanzie 'Settlement of Forest Rights and Privileges' in *Ibid* p 108

> reserved areas that are left will be insufficient to stave off great and general inconvenience [69]

The ideas of Dr Schlich in a way represented the Forest department's argument which wanted to demarcate extensive forest zones for the sylvicultural operations While formulating the forest legislation there was an extensive discussion on two patterns of forest management, i e rigid state control versus limited interference in forests But most of the colonial bureaucracy was in favor of the state authority over forests and argued that the state as rational trustee and best suited to manage the forests in India

Another forest conference was held at Simla under the chairmanship of Dr Brandies In this conference some of the forest officials advocated the idea that forests were public property and they have been managed by the state for public welfare C F Amery pointed out that the "State forest is not a private propertier a king may be and is in respect of all royal forests but state forests are the property of the people at large to be administrated by their representatives for the benefit of all" [70] The point to be mentioned here is that C F Amery attempted to rationalise the colonial state s role as 'benevolent landlord' which would manage forest resources for the public welfare Thus the state monopoly was sought to be grounded in managing the forest resources in India under the rhetoric of public welfare

Baden-Powell while defining the forest rights and privileges proposed that after the reservation of forests, while the state should acquire the ownership rights the people would be given user rights He argued that the rights in reserve forests could be admitted only in

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Ibid p 111

Dietrich Brandis and G S Gamble (ed) *Proceedings of the Forest Conference* Simla 1875 p 28

the presence of the evidence recorded in the land settlement records He defined the privileges' as a concession granted by the government authorities to the people to access grazing fire-wood small wood and other facilities He argued that in the pre-British India no doubt peoples access to their neighbouring forests without restriction was existed but for him it was in the form of privileges granted by the local rulers He proposed the following limitations to privileges enjoyed by people

> 1) Privileges may be stopped in portions of the forest which the Government wishes to close for planting or reproduction
> 2) They are always given for the convenience of individuals villages, &c but are not intended to be sold and bartered People are allowed to take firewood e g for their own house -but not to cut cart loads and sell to bazaar dealer or a railway depot [71]

The object in proposing the category of privileges is to bring peoples forest usage pattern under the control of the state agency Baden-Powell argued that privileges could be regulated and even withdrawn by the government at any time This definition had a deep influence on the forest legislation in the British India

While opposing the Draft Bill prepared by Dr Brandis, the Madras Government argued that the forests were communal property of villagers This argument was not accepted by the forest officials They advocated that village communities do not have the capacity to manage forests in India Dr Brandis felt that "If communal forests are created their administration would have to be in the hands of the department for village communities in India cannot at present be expected to be sufficiently alive to their own

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Dietrich Brandi *Memorandum on the Forest Legislation proposed for British India other than the Presidencies of Madras and Bombay* p 112

interests" [72] Thus, for Dr Brandis the creation of communal forests in India was not expedient because the village communities did not have the sense of conservation and therefore incapable of managing forest resources He proposed that if at all the communal forests were to be created they should be managed by the Forest department Thus the village communities' role in managing the forests was not accepted by the colonial bureaucracy Consequently the village communities rights were not incorporated into the forest legislation in India enacted during the British colonial rule

The main theme of the legal debate on the forest policies in the colonial India was on the nature of people's rights in forests Dr Brandis hypnotised that the evolution of the forest rights in India have resembles the origin of the rights of commons in Europe for wood and pasture For him, the forest rights were inherently limited in nature and could only be exercised as long as the waste lands or forests provide the resources He argued that as in Europe in India also the forest usage was regulated from time to time by the local rulers He pointed out that forest usage in India existed in the form of user rights but not as property rights Thus he sought to provide justification to the role of state in intervening in forest management To quote

> Villagers who from time immemorial were accustomed to cut and grase in the nearest jungle lands did not acquire a rights by prescription because they used the forests without any distinct grants or license and without an idea of assenting a right as against ruling power or against other individuals of communities that the state had not exercised its full rights over the forests, which were left open to anyone who chose to use them, but the right of the state was unimpaired and was asserted whenever a native rulers chooses to close whole areas of forests to preserve the game, as in

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[72] Dietrich Brandis and G S Gamble (ed) *Proceedings of the Forest Conference* p 35

> the well-known instances of Belas of Sindh enclosed by the Amires.[73]

For Dr Brandis people may have used the forest resources from time immemorial but without any rights by prescription and the state had unimpaired right It was this thinking that went into the conceptualization of rights by the colonial bureaucracy in India In other words they argued that the state is the sole owner of forests and though people customarily accessed neighboring forests it was interfered by the state whenever it requires forests for specific purpose Majority of the forest officers in India subscribed to this idea that the customary forest usage existed not in the form of rights but were privileges and concessions granted by the local rulers Though the debate within the colonial bureaucracy reflected the heterogeneous ideas on legality of peoples' rights, by 1870s they evolved a broader consensus on the treatment of forest rights in India It was argued that peoples' access to the forests in India could not be treated as rights, but for they were privileges or concessions granted by the state for the requirements of people and therefore, what proposed by Dr Brandis and other could be legitimate state policy

After 1875 the colonial state initiated attempts to prepare the forest legislation at all India level and insisted that the provincial governments must also formulate similar forest legislations Under the pressure of the Government of India the Madras Government appointed a committee in 1875 for preparation of a draft forest bill The committee was instructed by the Governor of Madras Presidency to enquire on the following categories of the forests

> I) State forests--Their reservation and wherever necessary the question therein of existing rights and estimates

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Dietrich Brandis *Memorandum of the Forest Legislation* p 13

II) Communal forests-- For benefit of the community having rights in them

III) Property forest -Whether belong to *Zamendars*, other land owners or corporate bodies their sound administration of the preservation of wastelands under equitable conditions to payment for inspection & c [74]

The above mentioned model on forest categorisation for the Madras Presidency was intended to evolve consensus between the Government of India and the Madras Governments The Madras Government incorporated the interests of the Government of India by creating the state reserve forests At the same time the communal forest category was proposed to cater to the needs of the people.[75] But, the committee appointed for preparation of the forest bill could not conduct an enquiry due the non cooperation from the Board of Revenue and the revenue officials

The Government of India on its part went on insisting that the Madras Government should adopt a systematic policy in order to bring about better revenue results In 1878 the Government of India dispatched a Forest Draft Bill for the consideration of the Madres Government [76] In response to this, like in 1860s the Madras Government took position that the state forests could not be created due to the fact that the forests in the Presidency were the common property of villagers

In response to Forest Draft sent by the Government of India, the Madras Government sent a telegram wherein it wrote that The Government unanimously considers that the Bill pointing directly to arbitrary absorption of private rights and property will cause great

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[74] Dietrich Brandis *Memorandum* on the *Demarcation of Public Forests in the Madras Presidency* Simla Government Press Simla 1878 p 40

[75] BORP 7th December 1876 No 105 and No 3096 p 9796
Letter from the Government of India Department of Revenue and Agriculture 12 F 5th January 1878 in D Brandis *Memorandum on the Demarcation of Public Forests* p 40

disaffection and create serious disaffection If passed at all essential that it be declared in the Bill itself inapplicable to Madras [77] Most of the revenue officials and the Board of Revenue argued that the Madras Government should formulate the forest act that would be suitable to the local conditions

The objection of the Madras Government expressed in the Minute by the Governor of the Madras Presidency was as follows I believe that this Bill if passed will in this Presidency give rise to grave dissatisfaction and will create serious disaffection I believe that it will do so not because of the native people are averse to the maintenance and protection of forests but because the basis and principle of the Bill is the ultimate extinction of all private rights in or over forests or waste land and their absorption by Government [78] The Governor of Madras felt that the clauses from 14 to 24 in the Draft Bill empowered the government to confiscate forests and waste lands for monopolistic control and exploitation instead of protection of the forests He argued that the object of the government in the Madras Presidency was to preserve and maintain forests for public private benefit and climatic protection He suggested that in the Madras Presidency the village communities should be encouraged to preserve and improve neighboring forest tracts for their benefits [79] Sir Robinson the Secretary to the Madras Government while criticising the chapter III of the Draft Bill argued that

> No legislation can be I believe suitable to Southern India which does not in *limine* recognise in specific terms the ancient landmarks of village communal property and secure to the community the income of their joint property and a special interest in its administration This Bill disposes in a single section of a

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Minute by the Governor of Madras 9th February 1878 in *Ibid* p 40
Ibid p 41
Ibid pp 41-42

> matter in which the majority of the population of South India is preeminently concerned, and that by introducing into the administration of village woodlands and pasture wastes, and of village forests for-jealously conserved village boundaries include many of these-the provisions of the Bill which can suit State forests The provisions of the bill are wholly unsuited to the village conditions of South India and practically I fear are hostile to them [80]

Thus Robinson rejected that Forest Draft Bill sent by the Government of India on the ground that it would curtail the peoples communal rights in forests Mr Huddelstun member of the Board of Revenue also felt that the Draft Bill sent by the Government of India proposes immense powers to the forest officers and would not be suitable to the Madras Presidency While describing the nature of the forest tenure in the Madras Presidency he wrote that

> In this Presidency, there is not an acre of land which does not lie within the limits of some village, and in the unclaimed portion of which the villagers have consequently, from time immemorial, claimed and exercised certain common rights of procuring timber for building their house or constructing agricultural implements collecting fuel, or grass or leaves for domestic and agricultural use, of hunting fishing and grazing their cattle, and from time to time have in accordance with local customs extended cultivation, subject to the Government and village dues [81]

Thus the revenue officials and the Board of Revenue argued that the people exercised communal rights in the forests in the Madras Presidency for generations and should not be disturbed by the state However, the Government of India continued to make efforts to convince the Madras Government on its draft forest legislation Regarding the problems on communal forests raised by the Madras Government on the Secretary to the Government of India Revenue and Agriculture proposed that

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[80] Minute by the Robinson 3rd February 1878 in *Ibid* 43
[81] Minute by W Huddelstun 14th February 1878 *Ibid* p 45

> If after full and careful inquiry any of these tracts should be found to be the property of the village communities, it would seem still necessary to demarcate these tracts as communal though not as State forests It is the duty of the Government to take care that communal rights in forests shall be exercised in a manner which consistent with the preservation of the forests and the permanent general benefit of the community These communal forests if such there be should therefore be protected and improved by the State and under the control of the State, so as to provide permanently for the requirements of proprietors The revenue derived from such forests should be expanded for the community in the construction of road of wells tanks and other works chiefly of communication and water storage [82]

At the same time, Mr Hume the Secretary to the Home Department warned the Madras Government that it must accept the necessity of the forest legislation in the Madras Presidency and to quote

> But we are helpless and hopeless and the only apparent remedy is a heroic one, neither more nor less than to take advantage of the existing great financial difficulties to abolish the Governorship of Madras and Bombay and subordinate those provinces to the Government of India in the same way that Bengal is subordinated Give us right to interfere and issue orders and in three years we can engage to alter altogether the prospect for forest revenue in Madras [83]

Thus due to strict warning by the Government of India the Madras Government prepared a Forest Bill for its province and sent it to the Government of India for its consideration The Madras Draft Bill proposed to organise forest landscape into reserved forests village forests, closed forests and protected forests This categorisation clearly indicates the change in the perception of the Madras Government on the peoples

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[82] The Secretary to the Government of India Department of Revenue Agriculture and Commerce No 127 13 January 1878 *Ibid* p 6

[83] Office Note by Hume 2/5/1879 in Pro A 32 52 cited in Ahileshwar Pathak Law *Strategies Ideologie Legislating Forests in Colonial India* p 147

communal rights in forests [84] It accepted the Government of India contention of state ownership on the forests by creating the category of reserve forests as state property The point to be noticed here is that there was no mention of the communal forests that were advocated earlier so vocally by the revenue officials The Madras Government justified the creation of state forests on the ground that the permanent forest estates would ultimately serve public welfare protect climate and irrigation sources and provide for fuel and fodder to the population This change in the Madras Government s perception on the forest management was under the strict warning of the Government of India Thus the Madras Government changed its perception on forest tenure pattern and accepted the necessity of creating state forests

The section 15 proposed in the Madras Forest Draft Bill empowered the government to create village forests While reacting to the village forests as a separate category the Madras Government proposed to constitute in all government villages a sufficient area of forest tract adjacent to each village as village forests Regarding the nature of the village forests the Madras Forest Draft Bill proposed that ' With such area all customary rights of collecting fuel or timber for building material or agricultural implements or other forests produce whether free of payment or otherwise shall continue to be exercised as hereafter by the villagers for use within the villages, subject only to such rules and regulations as may from time to time be made for ensuring full exercise of such right to all concerned and the due conservation of the forests' [85] But the Secretary of Revenue and Forests and

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[84] Proceedings of Home Revenue and Agricultural Department Forests October 1879 No 8-38 (National Archives of India)

[85] *Ibid*

Agriculture of India, while criticising the Madras Draft Bill argued that the creation of village forests would create problems in the Madras Presidency He argues that

> The chapter relating to the village forests would virtually prevent the demarcation of reserve forests perhaps for the many years to come No such forests can under the act be legally demarcated until the compulsory provisions of section 15 have been complied with The allotment of forests to each government village has moreover, to be preceded by an enquiry, which may after give rise to great difference of opinion as to whether the allotment is practicable and weather it is requisite such enquiry must necessary taken up much valuable item [86]

Though the colonial state felt the urgency in creating reserved forests in the Madres Presidency it could not approve the Madras Draft Bill The Government of India sent back the Draft Bill sent by the Madras Government by pointing out that ... It would appear absolutely necessary that the existence of these supposed communal forests should first be established by a through enquiry, if they are really found to exist that appropriate measures for their protection and management should be framed" [87] The Government of India felt that the communal forests in the Madras Presidency require a thorough investigation before forest legislation could be attempted

Under the pressure from the Government of India the Madras Government undertook an enquiry on the communal rights in the forests in the Madras Presidency It appointed a Forest Commission to enquire into the nature of the communal rights exercised by the people in forests [88] The Forest Commission of 1878 was appointed to suggest

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[86] Pro R&F Forests October 1881 no 1 37 pp 2 3

[87] Correspondence from Secretary to the Government of India to Secretary of the Government of Madras 1879 in *Ibid* Letter from the Secretary to the Government of India to the Secretary of Revenue Madras in Home and Revenue and Agriculture (Forests) Oct 1879 Proc NO 8 38

[88] G O No 1 105 20 July 1878 in BORP 27 February 1879 No 521 p 1368

recommendations on the formation of the forest reserves in various districts For instance examining the situation in Coimbatore district it recorded that

> We are of opinion that there are no communal privileges at all nor have any such been claimed the village forests in which they may have exited having been cleared for cultivation and that the future requirements are the preservation and improvement of the forests on account of climatic considerations generally, the permancy of the water-supply and that of timber and firewood to meet present and future demands We are further of opinion that cultivation in its ordinary sense has reached its extreme limits and that no further extension exempt in the shape of coffee, tea and cinchona on the hills, should be provided for or permitted [89]

The Forest Commission in way completely changed the nature of the discourse on communal rights in the Madras Presidency It argued that the communal rights were disappeared on account of clearance of common lands for cultivation The Forest Commission therefore felt that it is justifiable to create forest reservation on the ground that agriculture expansion had reached a saturation point and remaining waste lands should be conserved by the state for public welfare The Forest Commission s explanation on the nature of the communal rights in Madras even endorses the distinction made between the legal rights and privilege to quote that

> No claims to communal privileges have been preferred by which we mean that no right held in common by a number of person against all other persons or the State has been advanced on the contrary it had been universally admitted that cattle from all parts of this and even the adjoining district are more or less pastured on the hills as well as those from the village in the immediate vicinity On the other hand that the privilege or free use of the pasturage has been enjoyed by all comers for periods varying in length according to the extension of cultivation and consequent disappearance of the village forests in the plains is undoubted This privilege had

[8] Correspondence from the Collector of Coimbatore and the Deputy Conservator of Forests to the Secretary to Government Revenue 9 October 1878 in *Ibid* p 1371

> virtually extended over the whole area of the hill forests in the plains is undoubted [90]

The position in the above passage attests the Madras Government's move towards the ideas of Baden-Powell and Dr Brandis who have advocated that the forest usage pattern of the people in India did not constitute rights in legal sense rather privileges allowed to be exercised as long as the governments deemed them fit.

The Assistant Collector who was a member of the Forest Commission in Coimbatore district argued that the practice of grazing cattle in the existing government jungles was comparatively of recent origin. He stated that

> Communal rights I mean rights common to all the inhabitants of a village and relating to users within the village boundaries. At the time of the settlement certain lands were set apart as common grazing grounds &c. These were not probably sufficient at that time and the villagers either grazed their cattle on a portion of their *Patta* lands which were lying fallow, or sent them to the nearest government forests or waste land (not being common land of another village). I do not think that the practice of sending their cattle away from their village to graze in government jungles would give the people rights of common in these jungles [91]

Thus the Forest Commission appointed to conduct enquiry into the Coimbatore district suggested that the communal rights disappeared when the waste lands and forests were brought under cultivation in plain areas. By 1880s, the Madras Government went to the extent of postulating that the communal rights did not exist in the Madras Presidency. In the light of instructions from the Government of India the revenue officials' opposition to the forest legislation was faded away completely. Thus the prolonged battle by the revenue officials in opposition to the forest legislation and their advocacy on the communal rights was completely naturalized by the Government of India logic of maximisation of

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Ibid p 1372

Enclosure No 3 Memorandum on the Forests Settlement in *Ibid* p 1375

revenue from colonies The main reason why the Government of India constantly insisted on the Madras Government to formulate a forest act on the lines suggested by her was the realisation of potential of revenue from forest resources The following table shows that revenue derived from the forests

Revenue Details of Forest Department

Quinequennial Periods	Gross Revenue in rupees	Expenditure in rupees	Surplus in rupees
1864 65 to 1866-67 (3 years' average)	36,29 321	22,29,831	13 99 481
1867-68 to 1871-72	46,34 453	32,95 160	13 39 293
1872 73 to1876 77	65,38 373	44 09 179	21 29 104
1882-83 to 1886 87	1 06,78 807	68,31 284	38 47 523

Source Berthold Ribbentrop, Forestry in British India, p 174

The above table shows the financial transactions of the Forest department in India The demonstrative increase in surplus had made the colonial state by 1870s to perceive the landscape as one of the potential sectors of revenue generation This was one of the strong imperatives that had influenced the forest policies of colonial state i e monopolistic control on the forest resource in India not only to meet the timber requirements of the government departments but also to generate income from forest resources

In 1881 the Government of India deputed Dr Brandis to prepare the forest legislation for the Madras Presidency He visited some of the districts to observe the existing pattern of forest organization His report had become an important source for the Madras Forest

Act of 1882 Dr Brandis proposed that the forest conservation should not only focus on the sylvicultural operations, but also concentrate on providing for fuel and fodder to the population He attempted to expand the institutional scope of the forest conservation and even succeeded in convincing the Revenue department to drop opposition to forest conservation policies He wrote that " . . It must now be distinctly recognised that not only does the provision of timber and firewood come within the legitimate scope of forest administration in India, but one of its most important duties will in future be to increase the supply of cattle fodder particularly during seasons of drought in the drier districts The importance of this feature of Indian forest administration has by no means yet been sufficiently recognised [92]

Dr Brandis proposed the following categorisation of forest cover in the Madras Presidency to be brought under the forest act reserved forests, reserved lands and private forests On creation of village forests, Dr Brandis felt that the constitution of village forests would be a difficult task and to quote him Forestry is as yet still a new business in India, and in order to secure success at the beginning it is necessary to deal with the problems of forest protection in its easiest form We must at the outset only undertake the protection of compact areas of suitable size with convenient boundaries it will be possible to embark upon a bolder policy and to settle village forests in those tracts which are better suited for cultivation of them for the growth of timber [93] Dr Brandis therefore totally in favor of creating the reserve forests as a state property In fact his recommendations on the forest legislation for the Madras Presidency represent the end of prolonged debate on the

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Dietrich Brandis *Suggestions Regarding Forest Administration in the Madras Presidency* 1883 Government Press Madras p 7

Ibid p 77

communal forests articulated by the revenue officials in the Madras Presidency To quote him that

> As practice exists in South Arcot and in several other of the southern districts under which the members of the village community hold *pattas* for fruit trees and grass beds for thatching in common (*Samudayam pattas*) but Communal Forests in the sense in which the word is understood on the Continent of Europe do not, so far as I am aware exist in this Presidency The District Forest Committees which under the orders of Government selected reserves in the Coimbatore Madura and TInnevelly Districts from 1878 to 1880 and enquired into the rights in the reserves selected by them, and it is now generally acknowledged that there is no communal proprietorship in forests in the Presidency Under these circumstances no provisions concerning Communal Forests were required in the Act [94]

The revenue officials' bid for the communal forests was dropped by the Select Committee constituted by the Madras Government to prepare the Forest Bill for it had endorsed the suggestions of Dr Brandis on the communal forests and to quote

> We are further of opinion that there are no communal forests in this Presidency The villagers are in the habit of collecting firewood thorns for fence, and of pasturing their cattle on, driving them across, and themselves passing over waste lands so long as these are not required by the Government for cultivation or other purposes and to this extent they may be said to exercise rights of pasture or other rights of user in the waste and forest lands included in their village areas Such rights of user however are vastly different from property rights and their existence does not constitute the forests in which they are exercised communal forests [95]

Thus Dr Brandis and the Select Committee concluded that there were neither communal nor community rights and forests existed in the Madras Presidency and argued

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Ibid p 20
Ibid p 277

that people had only user rights allowed to be exercised by state These views exercised a deep influence on evolution of the government forest policy in Madras

The Select Committee endorsed the recommendations of Dr Brandis on forest legislation for the Madras Presidency One of the important recommendations of the Select Committee was the creation of the reserve forests as state property The Committee proposed to argue that forest conservation should be undertaken by state in order to provide forest products to people[8] Thus state monopolistic control on forest landscape was justified under the pretext of the public welfare by the colonial state Another category proposed by the Select Committee and Dr Brandis was the reserved lands This was aimed at controlling the alienation of forest lands for cultivation The Select Committee justified the creation of the reserved lands in the following lines

> We are not desire to restrict generally the continued extension of cultivation in order to increase the forest area, but it is certain that in all districts there is a considerable extent of land which is not wanted for cultivation and which contain forest growth or is suitable for conversion into woodlands We think that such lands should be set a part for forests purposes and we therefore propose to constitute a category of reserved lands which will, under section 26 be protected by distinct legislative declaration from alienation on *Patta* but which may if temporary occupation of it for cultivation is unsuitable be made available for that purpose under one year lease[9]

Thus the Select Committee argued that the expansion of the agriculture went to such an extent that it may affect the general prosperity of agriculture production Thus apart from the revenue imperatives agriculture adjustment also compelled the Madras Government to formulate a forest act

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Ibid p 280
Ibid p 281

By 1882 a broad consensus was arrived at in the Madras Presidency on the issue of state ownership on forests The Board of Revenue and the revenue officials' advocacy on the communal rights was given a go by The prolonged debate on the forest legislation in the Madras Presidency represents an example on how the formulation process of the forest policies was carried out in colonial India and how the colonial state acquired the monopolistic control over the forest resources in spite of differences within the bureaucratic structure on the one hand and imperial and provincial government on the other The noticeable fact here is that the colonial forest policies have evolved out of a diversified contestation within the colonial bureaucratic structure The prolonged disagreement between the Governments of India and Madras on one hand and differences between the Forest and Revenue department on the other, influenced the nature of the debates and discourse on the forest policies in the Madras Presidency Finally however it was the interests of the colonial state characterised by a system of state monopoly over forests that has prevailed upon In this chapter we have shown how the legal discourse of the colonial bureaucracy on the forest legislation justified the imposition of the state authority over the forests by abrogating peoples forest rights Though the Madras Presidency remained opposed to the forest legislation for a long period of time due to the pressure from the Government of India it had to formulate the Madras Forest Act of 1882 By 1880s it was accepted in the Madras official circles that there existed no communal forests and consequently time immemorial rights exercised by the people over forests were not given proper treatment while enacting the forest act Thus the promulgation of the Madras Forest Act of 1882 had initiated a new legal and administration regimes for forest management in the Madras Presidency

The important point that has emerged in our analysis is that though there were multiple voices pronounced within the colonial bureaucratic structure on the relation between the forests and people it was interests of the colonial state that have ultimately prevailed upon That the revenue officials who articulated for protection of people rights over the forests were completely neutralised The revenue officials used the demand of communal rights only as rhetoric to oppose that expansion of the Forest department in the Madras Presidency and therefore did not press their position to the logical end This colonial debate on peoples livelihoods versus forest conservation has a long history in India and this still is an unsolved question in contemporary India

IV
LEGALISATION AND BUREAUCRATISATION OF FOREST LANDSCAPE IN MADRAS PRESIDNECY

The debates and discourses on the forest legislation in the Madras Presidency were finally translated into the Madras Forest Act of 1882. The Act had initiated the processes of legislative intervention and bureaucratisation of the management of forest landscape and alienation of people from the customary access to forests. The present chapter narrates the forest policies that were instituted under the Madras Forest Act of 1882 and their implementation in the Madras Presidency. It attempts to deal with the question of how the colonial state defined the relationship between people and forests in the context of reserving the forests as state property and its implications for the livelihoods of people in the Madras Presidency. While analysing the forest reservation process, the emphasis is given on the forest reservation that was implemented in the plain areas of the Madras Presidency.

In the pre-British period, the uncultivated common lands and forest areas within easy access to villages were subjected to the customary rights exercised by tribes and peasants. These rights were not interrupted by the local rulers except in rare occasions. Thus, the people in India, for generations exercised the customary rights in their neighboring forests.[1] Atlury Murali argues that the colonial forest policies had undermined the customary rights of the local communities in the forests of the Andhra region.[2] Mark Poffenberger and Betsy Mc Green argues that the forest reservation process undertaken by the British Government

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1 Tirthankar Roy, *The Economic History of India 1857-1947*, Oxford University Press (hereafter OUP) New Delhi, 2000, p 102.

2 Atlury Murali, "Whose Trees? Forest Practices and Local Communities in Andhra, 1600-1922", in David Arnold and Ramachandra Guha (ed), *Nature, Culture and Imperialism: Essays on the Environmental History of South Asia*, OUP, New Delhi, 1996, pp. 50-86.

between the years 1800 and 1900 deprived the livelihoods of rural people by redefining the customary rights in forests [3] Thus, under the scheme of reservation of forests, the colonial state had appropriated most of the common lands and forests and denied the customary access of people in neighbouring forests. The present chapter examines how this process had taken place in the Madres Presidency

The Madras Forest Act of 1882 asserted that the forest landscape in the Madras Presidency belonged to the state It empowered the Madras Government to undertake demarcation reservation and settlement of forests as state property The articulation of the revenue officials on the protection of the communal rights of people in the Madras Presidency was not reflected in the Act as it was promulgated Dr Dietrich Brandis the main architect of the Madras Forest Act felt that the general framework of the Indian Forest Act of 1878 the Burma Forest Act of 1881 and the Madras Forest Act of 1882 were similar But he pointed out that the Madras Forest Act of 1882 possessed two peculiar features one, it did not have a chapter on village forests and two, it created the forest courts for allowing people to appeal against the decision of the Forest Settlement Officer [4] The forest courts were incorporated into the Madras Forest Act of 1882 in order to address the public discontent during the implementation of the forest settlement process in the Madras Presidency

The promulgation of the Madras Forest Act of 1882 had initiated the process of legalisation and bureaucratisation of the forest landscape in the Madras Presidency That is it initiated the process of converting the forest landscape into state property by imposing legal

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[3] Mark Poffenberger and Betsy McGean *Village Voices Forest Choices Joint Forest Management in India* OUP New Delhi 1996 pp 61-62

[4] Dietrich Brandies *Suggestions Regarding Forest Administration in the Madras Presidency* Government Press Madras 1883 p 2

and administrative restrictions on the access exercised by the peoples in the Madras Presidency While mentioning the objective of the forest reservation in India Baden-Powell wrote that The real task of Indian forest law is to legalise and of the Administration to carry into practice a procedure by which the rights of the State and of other persons may be sifted separated and adequately provided for so that a series of forest estates to which the forest law shall apply may be *constituted* or eliminated out of the somewhat chaotic conditions that actually subsist Baden Powell s statement illustrates the perception of the colonial bureaucracy on the forest reservation which was aimed at creation of state ownership in the Indian forests

The Madras Forest Act of 1882 was a lengthy legislation consisting of ten chapters and sixty eight rules These rules proposed the procedure for creating and managing reserved forests and reserve lands [6] It divided the forest landscape into following categories

1) Reserved forests
2) Lands at the disposal of the government which was not included in the reserved forests (These called reserved lands)
3) Forests or waste lands which were not the property of government but for special reasons may be placed under the control of government
4) Forests belong to private owners the management of which may be undertaken by the government at the request of those owners
5) Forests in which the government or any other persons are jointly interested which may be managed by government [7]

The Madras Forest Act of 1882 did not propose the communal forests that were advocated by the Board of Revenue and the revenue officials in the Madras Presidency It

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B H Baden Powell *A Manual of Jurisprudence for Forest Officers Being a Treatise on the Forest Law* Government Press Calcutta 1882 p 85

The Madras Code from 1803 1950 Government of Madras Madras 2nd Edition 1952 pp 57 97

C D Mclean *Manual of the Administration of the Madras Presidency* Vol II Reprint Edition Asian Educational Service New Delhi 1985 p 314 (Originally published by the Government Press Madras 1885)

attests the fact that the articulation on the communal rights was a rhetoric used by the revenue officials to oppose the expansion of the Forest department In other words that the nature of the colonial state policies at one level were identified with sensitive discourse on the protection of people rights and at the other end pushed the colonial state interests that ultimately prevailing in the final policy

The Madras Forest Act of 1882 declared the forest landscape as state property and the forest usage pattern exercised by people as the user rights It defined the land at the disposal of the government as All the unoccupied land whether assed or unassessed but did not include land the property of land holders defined in section 1 of the Act VIII of 1865 all persons holding under a sanad-i-milkiyat i istimarar all other *Zamindars shortyamdara pattadars inamdars* and all persons farming lands from the above persons or farming the land revenue under Government also holders of land under ratyatwar settlement or in any way subject to the payment of land-revenue direct to Government and all other registered holders of land in proprietary right '[8] Thus, all the revenue yielding lands which had the legal documents were exempted from reservation The Madras Forest Act in fact did not recognise the communal lands as a category to be exempted from reservation This Act therefore did not incorporate the revenue officials narratives on the communal rights in its final form

The definition proposed in the Madras Forest Act of 1882 on the land at the disposal of the government indicates the class bias of the colonial state in India It had safeguarded the interests of the dominant sections like *Zamindars* and *Inamdars* by exempting their lands from reservation Thus the ideas of Dr Brandies and Baden Powell that have advocated the

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In Madras Code p 311

view that waste and forest lands were the property of the state had the pro-*Zamandari* or *Indadari* policy have reflected in the Madras Forest Act of 1882

RESERVED FORESTS

The forest landscape in the Madras Presidency consisted of divergent vegetal zones. The natural and virgin forests were located mainly in hilly regions. These forests consist of valuable timber trees like teak, sandalwood, red sanders and other valuable timber trees. Rest of the forests were mixed forests, located both hilly and plain areas. These forests were mainly thorny scrub and grass lands in character. However, peoples' livelihood dependency on these forests, especially peasants was significantly high

The Madras Forest Act of 1882 has proposed two methods of forest reservation: first, direct reservation, under this method most of the natural and virgin forests were reserved as the Government property. By 1884, about 3000 square miles of forests were brought under reservation under this method and second method of reservation was settlement of peoples' rights over forests as prescribed in the Madras Forest Act of 1882. Under this method, most of the mixed forests and thorny scrub in plain and hill areas were brought under reservation.[9] Subsequently, reservation of these forests became a hard task for the Government of Madras. The main reason for this was people's livelihoods were critically dependent on these forests.

In order to bring the natural as well as thorny and mixed forests under reservation, the Madras Forest Act of 1882 has laid down an elaborate procedure for the creation and management of the reserved forests in the Madras Presidency. While the Rule 3 had empowered the government to declare any land at its disposal as a reserve forest, Rule 4

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[9] C.D. Mclean, *Manual of the Administration in Madras*, pp. 520-525

proposed that the Forest Settlement Officer who would settle the claims of the people on the forests proposed for reservation His main duty was to invite the claims by the people who had traditionally exercised rights in the forests that are proposed to bring under reservation A period of three months was given for the submission of the claims to retain rights in the forests The claims of people on accessing paths, watercourses, pasture and other forest products were settled by Forest Settlement Officer But on the disputes on the *patta* lands included in reserved forests the people were allowed to appeal in the courts created under the Madras Forest Act of 1882 [1] Once the forest settlement was completed the peoples' access was restricted in the notified reserved forests The rule 21 imposed the following restrictions on peoples' access in reserved forests

> Any person who—
> (a) make any fresh clearings prohibited by section 7
> (b) sets fire to a reserved forest or kindles or leaves burning any fire in such manner as to endanger the same or who in a reserved forest
> (c) kindles or carries any fire except at such season and in such manner as the district forest officer may from time to time notify
> (d) trespasses or pastures cattle or permits cattle to trespass
> (e) fells griddles marks lops, taps uproots or burns any tree or strips off the bark or leaves from or otherwise damages the same
> (f) quarries stone burns lime or charcoal or collects subject to anymanufacturing process or remove any forest produce
> (g) clears cultivates or breaks up any land for cultivation or any other purpose or
> (h) in contravention of any rule made by the (Government) hunts shoots fishes poisons water or sets traps of snares
> (i) damages alters or removes any wall ditch embankement fence hedge or railing Shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to six months or with fine which may extend to five hundred rupees or with both in addition to such compensation for damage done to the forest as the convicting Court may direct to be paid [1]

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[1] *The Madras Forest Manual* Government Press Madras 1912 pp 7 8
The Madras Code pp 374 384

The above mentioned regulations indicate clamping of restrictions on the peoples' access in reserved forests and their enforcement by a strict penalty and punishment procedure. With these regulations, all natural and some of the mixed forests in plain and hill areas were brought under the colonial rule of law. Consequently, the peoples' customary access to the forests was curtailed in the Madras Presidency.

Some checks and balances however, were incorporated into the Madras Forest Act of 1882 wherever the reservation of forest was undertaken by the Madras Government. The Rule 24 proposed that ' the Government may, by notification, direct that, from a date to be fixed by such notification, any forest or any portion thereof reserved under this Act ceased to be reserved '[12] This rule appears to have been incorporated due to the Revenue department's pressure that was aimed at checking indiscriminate territorial expansion of the Forest department mainly in the mixed forests in the plain areas wherein peoples' livelihood dependency was critical for survival.

RESERVED LANDS

The Section 26 of The Madras Forest Act of 1882 proposed for the creation and management of the forests which were mainly mixed forests and grass lands in plain areas. The Act allowed the revenue officials to exercise control over this category of forest lands since they were closely related to land revenue administration. The main intention of the Madras Government in creating the reserved lands category was to acquire control over scrub and grass lands in plain areas. The following regulations were laid down to manage reserved lands.

Ibid, pp. 381-82.

(a) regulate or prohibit the clearing or breaking up of land for cultivation or other purpose
(b) regulate or prohibit the kindling of fires and prescribe the precautions to be taken to prevent the spreading of fires
(c) regulate or prohibit the cutting sawing conversion and removal of trees and timber and the collection and removal of natural produce
(d) regulate or prohibit the quarrying of stone the boiling of catechu or the burning of lime or charcoal
(e) regulate or prohibit the cutting of grass and pasturing of cattle and regulate the payment (if any) to be made for such cutting or pasturing
(f) regulate or prohibit hunting shooting and fishing poisoning waste and fishing traps of snares
(g) Regulate the sale or free grant of timber or other natural produce and
(h) prescribe the fees royalties or other payments for such timber or other natural produce and the manner in which such fees royalties or other payments shall be levied [1]

For infringement of the above mentioned rules an imprisonment of a term that may extend up to one month or fine of two hundred rupees or both was imposed The forest lands proposed for creation of the reserved lands category were mainly the village commons and waste lands where people were accustomed to use forest products With these rules the village common lands where people were traditionally dependent grazing and minor forest products were put to hardship in the Madras Presidency

PENALTIES AND PUNISHMENTS

Enforcement of the rules sanctioned by the Madras Forest Act of 1882 was carried out by a strict penalties and punishment system The Rule 41 empowered the forest officers to arrest anybody who violate rules in the reserved forests The most obnoxious rule in the Act was the Rule 51 and under this rule forest and police officers were empowered to arrest any

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Ibid p 285

suspected person without any warrant from the magistrate [14] Due to these rules the Forest department acquired the policing duties which had resulted in the perpetual conflict with people in the Madras Presidency

Baden-Powell argued that the forest reservation procedure proposed in the Madras Forest Act of 1882 was complicated and its implementation depended on the ability and discretion of the Forest Settlement Officers who conducts the forest settlement process He felt that some of the rules of the Act gave enormous powers to the revenue officials in conducting the forest settlement process of mixed and thorny forests in plain areas in the Madras Presidency He expressed apprehension that due this reservation of forests in the plain areas might become hard task for the Madras Government [15]

Baden-Powell pointed out that one of the fundamental problems pertaining to the forest conservation in the Madras Presidency was the indiscriminate grant of the *pattas* on waste and forest lands in the plain areas by the revenue officials He mentioned that the chapter incorporated in the Madras Forest Act of 1882 in the form of reserved lands was aimed at regulating this practice He informed that in the reserved forests that were mainly situated in the plain areas the revenue officials were empowered to grant temporary *pattas* on lands under the rules 24 and 25 of the Act He also argued that these rules may create problems to conservation operations in Madras He expressed apprehension that the Board of Revenue and the revenue officials might misuse this provision and create obstacles for the progress of forest conservation in the Madras Presidency, particularly in plain areas [16]

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[14] *Madras Forest Manual* Vol II Government Press Madras 1940 p 25
[15] B H Baden-Powell The Madras Forest Act *The Indian Forester* Vol IX January 1883 No 1 pp 32-58
[16] *Ibid*

Baden Powell's remarks on the Madras Forest Act of 1882 once again brought into focus the rivalry between the Forest and Revenue departments Recalling history he strongly felt that in opposition to the forest conservation, the revenue officials on several occasions exaggerated the communal rights in the Madras Presidency [17] Thus the debate on the communal rights of the people over the forests in the Madras Presidency was supposed to have been conditioned by the prejudice of the revenue officials on the forest conservation In the Madras Forest Act 1882 there were no safeguards included on the communal rights of people and the discretionary powers were given to the Forest Settlement Officer to settle the claims by people for forest rights

ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE OF THE FOREST DEPARATMENT

The Madras Forest Act of 1882 initiated the formation of a systematic forest administrative structure in the Madras Presidency Prior to the Act, forest administration in the Madras Presidency was carried out by duel organization where the mountain and dense timber forests were managed by the Forest department and the village jungles and waste lands were controlled by the local revenue establishments Dr Brandis recommended for the amalgamation of the Forest and Jungles Conservancy departments [18] Based upon his proposals the Madras Government formulated the forest administrative system in the Madras Presidency [19] Under this scheme the Presidency was divided into two circles i e north and south circles and subsequently a third circle also came into to existence

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[7] B H Baden Powell The Madras Forest Act *The Indian Forester* Vol IX April 1883 No 4 pp 204 208
[8] Letter from the Secretary to the Government of Madras to the Secretary to the Government of India No 1614 23[d] September 1882 in *Collection of Papers Relating to the Administration of Forest Department in Madras Presidency* Government Press Madras 1915 p 9
[9] *Ibid* p 10

NORTHERN CIRCLE

Most of the Telugu speaking districts were included in this circle Those were Ganjam Vizagapatam Godavari Kistna Anantapur Bellary and Kurnool

CENTRAL CIRCLE

The districts included in this circle were located both the Telugu and Tamil speaking regions Those districts are Nellore, Cuddapah Chingleput North Arcot, South Arcot Tanjore Trichinopoly and Salem [20]

SOUTHERN CIRCLE

Most of the Tamil and Malayalam speaking districts were included in this circle Those are Madura Tinnevelly North Coimbatore South Coimbatore Nilgiris North Malabar South Malabar and South Canara [21]

After promulgation of the Madras Forest Act of 1882, the Madras Government accommodated the interests of both the Forest and Revenue departments in forest administration Because earlier the Select Committee appointed for preparation of the Madras Forest Draft Bill recommended for bringing the forest administration close to the land revenue administration The Committee felt that the Forest department could not manage the state forests with its inadequate staff without the support from the Revenue department [22] Thus, the responsibility of the forest administration were shared by the Forest and Revenue departments in all administrative units i e from the circle to village The

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The Annual Administrative Report of the Forest Department in Madras Presidency (hereafter AARFD) Madras 1895-95 p 4

Memorandum on the Division of Forests in the Madras Presidency by D Brandis 1st December 1882 in Board of Revenue Proceedings (hereafter BORP) 5th January 1883 No 9 pp 2-6

D Brandis *Suggestions Regarding the Forest Administration* p 305

crucial point that needed to be noticed here is that under the new system the forest administration was closely tied up with the revenue administration The Select Committee on the Madras Forest Draft Bill suggested that the District Forest Officer and his staff should work under the direct subordination of the District Collector Thus the revenue establishment acquired larger if not total control on the forest administration, particularly in the plain areas in the Madras Presidency

COLLECTOR AND CONSERVATOR

A circle is the biggest unit in the forest administration, headed by the Conservator of Forests who was the professional head of the Forest department He was authorised to execute the financial and organisational affairs pertaining to forest administration in district and circle level The Select Committee on the Madras Forest Draft Bill recommended that in the professional and technical aspects of the forest administration, the Conservator of Forests should be allowed to exercise powers and help the District Forest Officer in the preparation of the budget and district wise working plans The District Collector was made the head in the district forest administration Thus, the revenue establishment acquired control on the forest administration in the Madras Presidency Furthermore all administrative measures taken up by the Conservator and the District Forest Officer would have to be endorsed by the Collector Thus the Collector became the practical head of the forest administration branch in each district and in practice the powers of the Conservator of Forests remained mainly advisory in nature [23] This institutional arrangement prepared by the Madras Government for forest administration made the forestry not a professional scientific agency in managing

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Collection of Papers Relating to the Administration of the Forest Department p 3

forest resources, rather it was an appendix to the Land Revenue department in the Madras Presidency

DISTRICT FOREST OFFICER

The District Forest Officer was positioned under the supervision of the District Collector He was placed to assist the Collector and to carry out the district forest administration under his authority [24] While putting forwarded proposals on the forest administration in the Madras Presidency, Dr Brandis also proposed that the District Forest Officer should function under the control of the Collector He felt that 'The Collector being on the spot, is the fittest man to control the current work connected with forest business in his district and in doing so he must allow himself to be guided by in departmental, professional and financial matters by the Conservator who as head of the department, is the proper officer to maintain continuity of action in accordance with the forest policy decided upon Governments' [25] Thus, Dr Brandis appear to have taken this position in his bid to evolve a consensus between the Forest and Revenue departments The forest administrative structure, proposed at district level for forest organisation was as follows

> The Collector of the Revenue district in which any forest charge is situated is the head of the department in his district and responsible for the executive management the District Forest Officer being his assistant in forest matters The Chief Forest-officer in each circle is the Conservator a consulting and inspecting officer having authority in matters of finance and establishment The whole administration of the department is under the control of the Board of Revenue with whom the Conservator corresponds direct and from whom they and the Collector receive their orders and instructions [26]

G O (Government Order) No 1259 Revenue 16th November 1882 in *Ibid* p 6
Ibid p 8
G O No 191 Revenue 6th March 1888 in *Ibid* p 12

At divisional level the forest rangers were appointed to carry out forest administration while in the villages, the forest administration was conducted by the *minicifs* and the local revenue officials with the help of the forest subordinate staff [27] The Board of Revenue made as an apex body in forest administration by appointing a member who executes the administration pertaining to the forest management in the Madras Presidency The institutional structure created by the Madras Government shows that the forest administration from top to bottom i e circle to village level was put under the supervision of the Revenue department in the Madras Presidency Thus, the Revenue department acquired the control on forest administration for which it had fought rigorously with the Government of India

However the administrative arrangement sanctioned by the Madras Forest Act of 1882 could not completely resolve the conflict between the Forest and Revenue departments The Forest officials attempted to acquire control over the mixed forests in plain areas for deriving revenue on grazing and other minor forest products In a correspondence to the Board of Revenue, the Conservator of Forests proposed that the Forest department should be given complete control over reserved forests in plain areas [28] In response to the Conservator of Forests proposals the Board of Revenue argued that

> The process of forest settlement extinguishes all private rights which may exist in such forests or else admits and records them in the one case they are got rid of in the other they remain but are demarcated or otherwise defined but when all is said and done the forests is only rather more completely the property of the Government, and, as such, the more completely under the control of the Collector of the district than it was before It does not become a property exclusively vested in an independent department called the

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BORP 10th December 1883 No 3750 pp 1-3

[8] BORP Land Revenue and Forests No 181 25th March 1887 in *Ibid* p 10

> Forests department The administration of the forests of the Presidency is only branch of the Revenue department of the Government, and every Collector must understand therefore distinctly that when a forest declared to be reserved under section 16 un his district the only effect of such reservation is to vest it more absolutely in him as the representative of Government [1]

Thus the Board of Revenue firmly informed the Conservator of Forests that the Forest department was a branch in the revenue establishment under the headship of the District Collector This arrangement went well with the colonial state s agenda of acquiring the control on forest landscape to generate revenue, by making it a part of the Land Revenue department The scientific forestry was mainly a rhetoric used by it to control the forests and waste lands in the Madras Presidency

Despite the promulgation of the Forest Act which sought to address the issue of departmental jurisdiction in forest conservation the interdepartmental rivalry between the Forest and Revenue departments continued The following incident illustrates the nature of hostile relationship between them In Conoor taluk of Nilgiris district, the District Collector allotted some of the reserved lands to the people without consulting the Conservator of Forests On this matter, the Conservator of Forests complained to the Board of Revenue In response to the complaint the Board of Revenue supported the Collector and pointed out that the District Collector need not consult the Conservator of Forests while granting forest lands to people on lease In response to the Board of Revenue the Conservator of Forests wrote a letter to the Government of India This letter aptly illustrates the conflict between the Forest and Revenue departments in the Madras Presidency While describing the difficulties of the forest officers in the Madras Presidency the Conservator of Forests wrote that

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[1] Resolution dt 25th March 1887 F No 181 in *Collection of Papers Relating to Forest Administration* p 11

> The officers of the Madras Forest Department have been called upon to submit to too many hardships and have been subjected to many slights during the past five-and-twenty years and have nobly accepted both in the interests of their profession but there is a limit to everything and the Board's idea would certainly prove the last straw and destroy all cohesion and *esprit de corps* on which Mr. Brandis rightly in my opinion laid much stress No professionally trained forest officer with proper pride in himself and his profession would voluntarily come to this Presidency under such conditions, and we should only get the worst men sent out by the Secretary of State.'[30]

In the same letter the Conservator of Forests demanded that the Forest department should be transferred to a separate commissioner from the Revenue department. But, the Madras Government rejected these proposals and argued that ' One of the main reasons in fact *the* main reason, for the subordination of the District Forest Officer to the Collector and of the department generally to a Civilian head is to prevent the natural zeal of the trained forester for wholesale scientific conservancy being exercised at the expense of other interests and with too little sympathy for the wants and feelings of an ignorant population'[31] Thus Madras Government itself has moved on behalf of the Revenue department in curtailing and regulating the powers of the Forest department.

The powers of the Conservator of Forests were further reduced for in 1891 the power to prepare budget and administrative report and the budget estimates were removed from his preview.[32] Gradually the Conservator of Forests powers were curtailed and the Revenue department's control over the forest administration has increased in the Madras Presidency. This shift in power appears to have lived only a short time for the pressure from

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[30] Letter from the Conservator of Forests to the Secretary of the Board of Revenue, 4th May 1887 in *Ibid* p 17
[31] Government Resolution dt 12th August 1892 F No 440 in *Ibid* p 41
[32] *Ibid* p 67

the Government of India moved all the provinces including the Madras Presidency to implement conservation of state forests

The internal conflict between the Forest and Revenue departments continued to exercise mainly to acquire autonomous control on forest administration This conflict however did not affect the reservation of forests as the state property in the British India By the 1890s not only in the Madras Presidency but also in other provinces most of the forest landscape was brought under the state control The following table shows the extent of the forest reservation that was completed in various provinces under the British rule

The Extent of Forest Reservation in the Provinces under the British Rule by 1893

Province	Total are in Square Miles	Area of forests on 30th June 1893 in Square Miles
Bengal	150 727	12 808
North Western Provinces and Oudh	107 441	3 886
The Punjab	106 613	6 052
The Central Provinces	86 501	20 014
Burma (Lower)	87 220	5 790
Burma (Upper)	77 296	27 009
Assam	45 350	10 776
Coorg	1 583	893
Ajmere	2 711	147
Baluchistan		06
The Andamans	1 989	1 956
Berar	17 711	4 236
Madras	**86 380**	**17 187**
Bombay	121 352	14 510

Source Collection of Papers Relating to the Administration in the Madras Presidency Government Press, Madras 1915 p 92

Thus by the 1890s most of the provinces under the British rule have demarcated and settled the forests as state property In the Madras Presidency in spite of the opposition from the Revenue department most of the waste and forest lands were brought under reservation by the Forest department Though there were differences within the government machinery in provinces the Government of India could push them to execute the agenda of creating

state monopoly on the forests in India. In order to carry out the forest reservation and settlement process, the Madras Government had even sanctioned forest establishment within few years of the directive from the Government of India. The following table shows strength of the forest employees in various circles.

The Establishment of the Forest Department in Madras Presidency by 1895

Particulars	Northern Circle,	Central Circle	Southern Circle	Total
	1892 93	1892 93	1892-93	
Permanent				
Controlling staff				
Deputy Conservator	1	1	1	3
Assistant Conservator	5	6	6	17
Extra Assistant Conservator and there Sub Assistants	3 4	2 5	3 4	8 13
Subordinate staff				
Forest rangers	15	22	20	57
Foresters	31	48	48	127
Forest guards	222	299	210	731
Office establishment				
Clarks	18	42	45	105
Peons &c	66	70	63	199
Total	**365**	**495**	**400**	**1260**
Temporary				
Surveyors	7	4	5	16
Draughtsman	7	6	4	17
Foresters	1	15		16
Overseers		1		1
Supervisor		4	15	19
Depot Keepers	3	11	11	25
Clarks	7	14	7	28
Permit keepers	36	17	10	63
Guards	25			25
Peons	34	6	10	50
Mahouts	6		64	70
Thabadars	189	217	183	589
Masistrics		12	4	16
Gardeners	62	61	22	145
Lascars	6	20	8	34
Watchers	122	715	207	1,004
Boat Syrang	1	1	1	3
Total	**506**	**1,104**	**551**	**2,181**
Grand Total	**871**	**1,599**	**951**	**3,381**

Source The Annual Administrative Report of the Forest Department, Madras Presidency, 1894 95

The Madras Forest Act of 1882 has instituted a systematic administrative structure for the Forest department After 1882 large numbers of forest employees were recruited in order to carry out the increased duties of the Department It is evident from the above mentioned table that out of total employees number 3 381 2,181 are recruited on temporary basis Especially most of the forest watchers and guards who implemented the forest rules at the local level were temporary staff and were received low salaries Consequently they indulged in corruption by harassing people By 1895 about 19000 square miles of forest landscape was brought under the supervision of the Forest department The total number of the Forest department s staff by 1895 was increased to 3381 On an average, each employee of the Forest department controlled an extent of five and half square miles of forest land

The Madras Forest Act of 1882 initiated the process of reservation of forests as state property in 1884, and by 1895 most of the forest landscape in Madras was brought under the reservation as state property The following section of this chapter analyse the process of legalisation and bureaucratisation of forest landscape and alienation of the people from accessing the forests in Madras Presidency

FORFST RESERVATION PROCFSS IN MADRAS PRESIDFNCY

The settlement and reservation of forests as state property was a contested issue between the Forest and Revenue departments in the Madras Presidency for a long period The state considered this vexed issue resolved after promulgation of the Madras Forest Act of 1882 For it had facilitated the process of reservation of forests as state property While mentioning the object of the Madras Forest Act of 1882 the Board of Revenue pointed out that the Act was enacted for two reasons one to reserve the forest tracts which are important for

protection of climate and surface irrigation systems as state forests and second to provide pasture fuel and other requirements of the village population in the Presidency [33] The state monopoly on forests was thus justified by the Madras Government under the pretext of public welfare The actual reason behind the forest reservation however was to impose the state control over forest landscape to generate revenue and to meet the timber supplies for the government departments

Two patterns of the forest reservation mentioned in the Madras Forest Act one reservation of the natural and virgin forests and the forests controlled by the government before enacting of the forest act and second constitution of fresh reservation under procedure laid down in the chapter two of the Madras Forest Act [4] Under the first pattern the Madras Government reserved the forest lands without conducting the settlement procedure laid down by the Madras Forest Act of 1882 The extent of forest lands reserved under the first method was as follows

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Resolution dt 11[th] June 1883 No 1676 in BORP 11[th] June 1883 No 1676 1883 pp 1-2
C D McLean *Manual of the Administration* Vol II p 314

Status of Forest Reserves prior to the Passing Madras Forest Act of 1882

Reservation of forests before passing the forests act Districts (South Circle)	Area under reservation by 31st March 1883, in Square Miles
Chinglepat	84
North Arcot	271
South Arcot	399
Salem	44
Trichinopoly	6
Coimbatore } North	25
} South	163
Madura	306
Tinnevelly	315
Malabar	352
South Canara	1
Districts (North circle)	
Godavary	68
Kistna	156
Nellore	218
Cuddapah	301
Bellary	14
Anantapur	515
Neilgheries	59
Total	2782

Source C D McLean, Manual of Administration of the Madras Presidency Vol II Reprint edition, Asian Educational Service New Delhi 1985 pp 320-324

The above mentioned table shows the extent of forest reservation undertaken by the Madras Government over several years Before March 1883 the forest reserves were created in North Arcot, South Arcot Madura Cuddapah Tinnevelly and Nellore districts It was those districts that the state had built railway tracts which intern made heavy demand for wood The nature of the colonial forest policies therefore were aimed at utilising the Indian forest resources for strategic requirements

The second pattern of forest reservation mentioned in the Madras Forest Act of 1882 was under the scheme of an elaborate legal process This process practically excluded the people from accessing forests by redefining and restricting the customary access to the

forests in the Madras Presidency The Madras Government justified the state control over the forest landscape but such a justification did not rule out the possibility of providing for peoples needs The state sought to provide grazing firewood and other forest products to the population and yet realise the objective of protection of rainfall climate and surface irrigation by maintaining ideal forest cover in the region Commenting on this aspect Dr Brandis wrote that

> In some portion of the dry districts of this Presidency cultivation already attained its maximum extent compatible with the prosperity of the country, and in these tracts all efforts must be directed towards the improvement of forests and grazing grounds, but here also it is probable that though at first it will be necessary to demarcate extensive areas as reserved forests, it will be expedient hereafter the forest has became dense and compact on these areas to set apart for cultivation selected tracts the soil of which has became enriched by forest growth and where the water-supply in springs and wells has been improved and rendered safe, even in seasons of droughts by the protection of surrounding hills [35]

Dr Brandis attempted to justify the reservation of forests as state property so that both the objectives could be achieved the requirements of agriculture and also reduction of droughts by improving the water supply and the soil fertility He thus facilitated the government intervention in the waste and forest lands as well as management in the Madras Presidency

While selecting the forests for reservation the Madras Government instructed the forest officers to take cognisance of the factors that were essential for selection of forests for reservation Commenting on this point, C D Mclean wrote that ' The Forest officer entrusted with selection of blocks for permanent reservation considers the quality of the

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[35] D Brandis *Suggestions Regarding the Forest Administration* p 6

growth the requirements of the neighborhood the question of the improvement of the supply of water in the streams and the provision of sufficient areas for probable requirements of grazing rights and similar privileges He provides also for convenience of boundaries and for securing roads and rivers for export of produce[6] For instance the forest settlement pattern undertaken in the Salem district shows the pattern of reservation and settlement of forests by the Madras Government

Forest Reservation pattern undertaken in Salem district by 1890

Reserves	Climatic and general	Timber Reserves	Railway fuel	Village fuel	Sandal	Total
Total Reserves in Square Miles	300 68	288 68	76 672	174 12	26 68	866 21

Source C D McLean Manual of the Administration of the Madras Presidency Vol II p 324

The forest settlement pattern implemented in Salem district shows the categories under which forests were brought under the government control Out of 866 square miles of the total forests selected for reservation 742 square miles of forest landscape was reserved for various requirements of the state while 174 square miles of forests were given for people s requirements Thus 80% of the reserved forests were created to meet the timber demands of the government departments in Salem district The exploitation of the forest resources for state requirements thus appear to the main objective of the state forest reservation policy implemented under the Madras Forest Act of 1882

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[6] C D McLean *Manual of the Administration* p 516

FOREST SETTLEMENT OFFICER

The Forest Settlement Officer played an important role in forest reservation process undertaken by the Madras Government The Rule 4 (c) of the Madras Forest Act instructed the government to appoint a Forest Settlement Officer for conducting an enquiry on the rights claimed by people [37] Generally, the Assistant Collectors or the Deputy Collectors were appointed as the Forest Settlement Officers

In 1884, the Madras Government notified the functions and duties of the Forest Settlement Officers It suggested that the Forest Settlement Officers should conduct a careful enquiry and define, commute and settle the claims by people at the time of forest settlement The Madras Forest Act categorised the claims for rights by people into two categories one claims for forest produce and two, the claims for the *pattas* lands included in reserved forests In case of former, the Forest Settlement Officer was empowered to use his discretionary powers and in case of latter, people were allowed to appeal in the courts created by the Act, in case of disagreement with the decision of the Forest Settlement Officer [38]

While suggesting the nature of the duties of the Forest Settlement Officers the Board of Revenue pointed out that "... When an officer is appointed to be a Forest Settlement Officer the duty he suppose to bear in mind is that he has to discharge the very important and delicate judicial functions with strict impartiality as between the one hand the state and the clients of lands or rights on the other hand" [39]

The Forest Manual p 11

[38] Notification of the Forest Department dt 27th August 1884 in BORP 26th September 1884 No 3401/f307 pp 3-4

[39] Resolution dt 26th September 1884 No 3401/F307 in BORP No 3401/F 307 p 6

After promulgation of the Madras Forest Act of 1882 the Madras Government had undertaken the forest reservation process. During the years 1885 and 1900, most of the forests in the Madras Presidency were brought under reservation. Consequently, tribals and sections of peasants that were critically dependent on forests for survival for day to day needs were excluded from the customary access in neighbouring forest tracts. In the following section, we propose to show in detail how the forest settlement pattern undertaken by the Madras Government alienated the people from the customary access in forests in the Madras Presidency.

FOREST RESERVATION IN PLAIN AREAS

The forest reservation pattern implemented in the areas adjacent to the plain agrarian regions has significantly redefined the customary access in forests exercised by people. The Madras Forest Act proposed an elaborate procedure for settlement of peoples' claims for right to use forest resources in the proposed reserved forests. The nature of peoples' claims in forests were: claims on forest produce; inclusion of the *patta* lands in the reserve; access to water sources such as ponds and tanks, access to the temples located in reserves; access to grazing, fire wood and small wood for agricultural implements; thorns for fencing agricultural fields and the other amenities that were used by the villagers in neighbouring forest tracts. This access was strictly regulated after reservation of forests as state property.

The reservation of forests however, was not a smooth process for old rivalry between Forest and Revenue departments continued to reflect in the forest settlement process. For instance, while conducting the forest settlement in the Nadikotkur and Sirval taluks of Kurnool district, the Forest Settlement Officer admitted the claims by some of the villagers

for 12 mango trees as a right in the proposed reserve forest In response to the Forest Settlement Officer's decision, the Conservator of Forests in the North division argued that

If the Forest Settlement Officer is permitted to provide for indefinite wants of an indefinite prospective number of rights-holder he may be providing for the general absorption and final extension of the actual rights of the State' [40] The forest officials desire to create the state forest estates free from peoples' rights was surprisingly endorsed by none other than the Board of Revenue By supporting argument of the Conservator of Forests the Board of Revenue felt that the object of forest reservation was to create the state reserved forest estates free from private rights [41] The Board of Revenue encouraged the Conservator of Forests to appeal against the Forest Settlement Officer s decision in the court It was indeed a dramatic change in the argument of the Board of Revenue For about a decade back the Board of Revenue rigorously fought with the Government of India on the forest legislation in support of the peoples' rights in forests It shows fact that the Board of Revenue used the communal rights issue as a rhetoric in opposition to the expansion of forest conservation operations in the Madras Presidency

While implementing forest reservation the Madras Government decided to create the reserved forests free from the peoples' access even such access existed prior to the reservation of forests In 1883, the Madras Government notified the large blocks of the *Nallamalı* forests in Cumbam and Markapur areas as reserved forests Though some small portion of the forest tracts were declared as village common lands substantial portion of the

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[40] Letter from Conservator of Forests Northern Division in BORP 24 July 1886 F N 412 p ?
[41] Resolution dt 19[t] April 1886 F No 200 in *Ibid*

hills and jungles were settled as the reserved forests [42] Within a span of three years, about 1200 square miles of the Nallamali forests were demarcated and settled as reserved forests in 1886 [43] Thus extensive forest zones were brought under the control of state by restricting peoples access Under this drive for forest reservation the state had even appropriated most of the common lands where villagers accustomed to get forest products

In 1883 the Madras Government proposed to reserve certain forest tracts in Udayagiri and Chamakurti taluks of Nellore district It was recorded in the Forest Settlement Register that on the Udayagiri Hills, 15 families belonging to the *Muthurajoos* caste lived for many years At the time of forest settlement they claimed right of access to their cattle and goat for grazing and right to retain homes included in the proposed reserved forests The Forest Settlement Officer rejected both the claims and instructed the families to vacate the reserved forests [44] This incident demonstrates implication of the forest settlement process for it not only displaced people but also denied the customary access to forest resources that was critical for their livelihood

We illustrate the case of the Forest Settlement Officer, who disposed off the claims put forward by the people in the Satyamanglam forest settlement, in Salem district Because this type of settlement pattern was typical of the forest settlement was conducted in the Madras Presidency while the curtailment of the customary rights of people was common practice The neighboring people of Satyamanglam forests informed the Forest Settlement Officer that they required grazing access for 400 cattle and 150 sheep as a right in the

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[42] Letter from the Conservator of Forests to the Secretary BOR 1st October 1883 No 950 in BORP 16th October 1883 No 3106

[43] G O No 619 Revenue 24th July 1886 in BORP 30th August 1886 F No 461 pp 6-7

[44] Enclosure No 5 Letter from the Collector of Nellore No 654 June 16th 1883 in BORP 14 September 1883 No 2771 p 3

proposed reserved forests They claimed that for many generations it was a customary for them to graze cattle in the forests now proposed to be a reserved forest They informed the Forest Settlement Officer that it was a long standing custom exercised for generations and that custom in commons should be continued a valid right

The forest settlement officer however, did not admit peoples' claims as rights and argued that the claims could be admitted as privileges granted by the government but not as rights Thus the customary forest access was defined as a privilege granted at the will of the state to the people [43]

The reserve forest settlement pattern conducted in the Cuddapah district was another case where the customary rights of people were denied while implementing the forest settlement While the government proposed to reserve the Vattelur Hills the neighbouring *ryots* claimed for grazing access leaves for manure right to collect green lemon grass and thorns for fencing as rights As evidence on their customary access they informed the Forest Settlement Officer that for generations they accustomed to use the neighbouring forests which were proposed to be brought under reservation While disposing their claims the Forest Settlement Officer argued that though the claims by *ryots* appear to be longstanding the government from time to time interfered in this access and even granted *pattas* to individuals in the forest tracts and waste lands Thus, he asserted that the government had the right to dispose the forest and waste lands at its will [44] In the Madras Presidency in fact in India that the forest usage patterns were not legally recorded in documents rather they were

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[43] Letter from the Forest Settlement Officer Salem District 6th April 1886 No 253 in BORP 7 June 1886 No 302

[44] Report from the Forest Settlement Officer Cuddapah District 8th May 1886 in BORP 11th June 1886 F No 319

customary rights enjoyed by people in using the neighbouring forests for various requirements The Madras Government instructed the Forest Settlement Officer that he should admit the rights in reserved forests only in the presence of recorded documents Consequently the peoples claim for forests usage was recognised as a privilege granted by the state which people could exercise as long as the state permits

In the plain districts the customary access to common lands was strictly restricted by the reservation of minor forests When the forest settlement was conducted in the Begampalle reserve in Cuddapah district, the neighboring *ryots* claimed for grazing rights in the proposed reserve forest As evidence in support of their claim for right they informed the officer that it was unwritten longstanding custom The Forest Settlement Officer rejected the claim and argued that the government had the authority to continue or discontinue the customs since they were not legal rights He argued that such customs were constantly interfered by the government, with the *Daskhat* rules and these lands were allotted by allotting to people as *pattas* lands [47]

The reservation pattern done in Cuddapah district in the Kamalapuram reserve shows how the peoples' access was redefined in the context of the forest reservation in the Madras Presidency

> **Claims by people.** Some of the people claimed the right to graze cattle sheep and goats in the proposed reserve
> **Evidence** The village elders and the Karanam informed the Forest Settlement Officer that it was customary for people to access cattle grazing in the forests proposed for reservation
> **Forest Settlement Officer's decision:** He did not admit the peoples claim as rights and argued that the government might at any time

[4] Letter from the Forest Settlement Cuddapah District to the Secretary to the BOR 26th January 1886 No 71 in BORP 30 March 1886 No 767/F 150 pp 1 3

> take back or alienate the whole or any part of the land as it has done with waste lands elsewhere

The forest reservation in the Cuddapah district restricted the critical dependency of people on forests. The forest settlement conducted in the Pullampet taluk of Cuddapah district shows this process of alienation of people from customary access of people to the neighbouring forests

> **Claims by people** Some of the *ryots* claimed for rights to access grazing, cutting leaves for manure and collection of lemon grass (*botha*) and thorns for fencing fields
> **Evidence:** Peoples informed that they had been customarily exercising access to forest for many generations
> **Forest Settlement Officers' decision** I do not consider that either the customary practice of grazing, leaf manure cutting, grass cutting or cutting thorns for fencing though apparently they are of long standing can be regarded as rights, government constantly disturbs such customs and disposes off wastelands as it thinks fit The claims are therefore rejected'.[48]

Similarly, the forest settlement conducted in the Royachoti taluk of the Cuddapah district demonstrates how the customary access of peasants to forests was treated negatively at the time of forest reservation

> **Claim** The *ryots* from Odvedu, Sibbayala and Baduguntarazupeli villages claimed for rights in the forests proposed for reservation for cattle grazing and collection of leaf manure
> **Forest Settlement Officer's decision** While rejecting the claims by people the Forest Settlement Officer commented that The continuance of the customs was asked for more as a matter of grace than as a claim to a right Such customs are constantly interfered with by Government by the operation of the *Durkhast* rule and by restrictions which have been put on the description of leaves which may be cut for leaf manure such customs therefore are not legal easements The claims are rejected'.[49]

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[48] Letter from the Forest Settlement Officer, Cuddapah District, 8th May 1886, No. 5 in BORP, 11th June 1886, F No. 319

[49] *Ibid*, p. 10.

Thus the longstanding customary forest access exercised by the people in the Madras Presidency was defined as concessions or a privilege that could be exercised at the will of state and the government officers.

When the reserve forest settlement was conducted in the Yarraguntal reserve in Cuddapah district, the neighboring *ryots* claimed rights on grazing, cutting wood for agricultural implements and bamboo for fencing. As evidence the villagers informed the Forest Settlement Officer that for many generations they were been obtaining forest products from their neighbouring forests, which were proposed to be brought under reservation. In response to their claim the Forest Settlement Officer commented that

> The existence of the custom claimed is undoubted and they have been exercised apparently for many years either in the proposed reserved forests or in similar forests adjourning in which it is not proposed to reserve. It appears however that these customs have been exercised under express or implied license as defined in section 52 of the Easements Act of 1882. If not allowed expressively or impliedly by government the owner of the property, such practice would undoubtedly be unlawful and would constitute the offences of mischief or theft under the Penal Code. Government can therefore revoke such licenses, and does so when it orders the constitution of reserved forests. Again if we regard these customs in the light of possible easements enjoyed by the ryots of a certain village for the beneficial enjoyment of their lands the same argument which applies to the customs of grazing and grass cutting can also be applied to them. In either view therefore these are not prescriptive rights.[5]

The above illustration amply demonstrates the agenda followed by the Madras Government at the time of forest settlement. The forest landscape was regarded as state property. The customary rights of peasants were treated by the colonial forest law as concessions or privileges granted by the government for enjoyment of forest produce. Thus

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[5] BORP 19[th] July 1886 P. No 402 1886.

state ownership on the forest landscape was imposed by undermining the peoples' rights in forests in the Madras Presidency

The Madras Government in some cases took cognisance of the consequence of the sudden restrictions imposed on accessing forests by the people In few instances forest lands were excluded from the reserved forests and given to villagers for their requirements In the Sechecahllem range 2000 acres of the forest land that was included in the reserve forest was excluded and allotted for the villagers use From the Gudela reserves 3000 acres of forest lands that were given for the use of villagers to meet their requirements [51]

As a whole, the powers of legislating forest landscape as government property with restrictions imposed on customary rights had significant impact on the livelihoods of the people dependent on forests Baden-Powell, who was an active exponent of the Indian Forest Act of 1878 expressed concern after witnessing the implications of the forest settlement process in India He felt that legalisation of forest landscape and restrictions on peoples access to forests have serious consequences While describing the impact of forest settlement he noted that

> The conditions of life do not enable people readily to a new occupation or to modify their methods of agriculture If you expropriate a right of 'rab' or of getting *humus* manure from a forest, people do not know how to cultivate in another way, nor can they procure artificial or natural manure of another kind with the money offered The man who lives by his goats cannot go and change his life by establishing a market garden on the plot of land you have awarded him in extinction of his grazing rights nor if you offer him in a capitalized sum-twenty times (say) the annual cost of grazing for 100 goats-can he employ the money in starting himself in a shop or in some trade [52]

Ibid p 2

B H Baden Powell *Memorandum on Forest Settlements in India* Government Press Calcutta 1892 pp 6 7

By the mid 1890s, most of the forest lands in the Madras Presidency were settled as reserved forests In less than a decade the colonial state completed the process of forest reservation To complete this task of reservation as a time bounded program the Board of Revenue sanctioned four special surveyors while the Government of India sent a special survey party to the Madras Presidency This process of state reservation of forests and restrictions on the people s access in forests severely affected the forest dependent communities in rural areas As Baden-Powell felt people were unable to alter the customary dependency on forests that was critical for livelihoods or sustenance The observation of Baden-Powell acquires a more forceful necessary in the context of forest lands adjacent to the village settlement Because the legalisation and bureaucratisation of forest landscape process had curtailed the customary forest usage of peasants even in the plain areas for the colonial state had encroached upon the village common lands as well This process inflicted hardship mainly upon the poor who depended on neighbouring degraded forests for cattle grazing collection of fire-wood

FOREST RESERVATION AND TRIBALS

Tribal people in different parts of the Madras Presidency lived in forests and critically depended on them for survival The Madras Government had followed a careful policy while dealing with tribals There were two factors that compelled the Madras Government to adopt a cautious policy towards tribes one the need to use their local knowledge of forest routes and timber trees in Silviculture operations and to secure labor in forest conservation operations and two to prevent tribal revolts in opposition to the interference of the forest reservation in day to day life Tribals in various parts of the Madras Presidency were employed by the Forest department as watchers and laborers in boundary clearing operations

and fire patrolling activities The Forest Settlement Officer in Coimbatore district proposed that the forest lands should be given for tribals to carry out the *Kumri* cultivation on condition of helping the Forest department in fire tracing and conservation activities For instance the Forest Settlement Officer in Coimbatore district admitted the claim by the *Irulas* as a right to collect the minor forest produce like honey and wax in the proposed state reserve However, the Forest Settlement Officer made it clear that the *Irulas* would be allowed to exercise rights only so long as they assist the Forest department in its conservation activities [53] Thus, with regard to the tribes the Madras Government followed a cautious policy and tried to use their labour in the forest conservation operations

In some instances the restrictions imposed by the Madras Forest Act of 1882 were not implemented by the District Collectors in the tribal areas due to apprehension that tribals would revolt against the government For instance the Collector of Trichinopoly district informed the Board of Revenue that he received several petitions and complaints from tribals on the interference of the forest officers in restricting the shifting cultivation, which was their main source for livelihood The Collector expressed apprehension that imposition of restrictions on forest access hitherto enjoyed by the tribals would lead to severe unrest and create problems to the government [54] The Board of Revenue while concurring with the Collector s opinion suggested that the restriction on the shifting cultivation should be imposed gradually only [55]

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[53] Letter from the Forest Settlement Officer Coimbatore District 31st September 1884 No 60 in BORP 3rd October 1884 No 3454/F316

[54] Letter form the Collector of Trichinopoly to the Secretary to BOR 2nd April 1885 No 1193 in BORP 17 April 1885 No 1201/F 217 p 1

[55] Resolution dt 17 April 1885 No 101/F 217 in *Ibid*

All Forest Settlement Officers however were not so considerate and forward looking For instance the forest settlement conducted in the Nagaluthu reserve in Salem district some of the tribals claimed rights on the collection of minor forest products in the proposed reserved forests The Forest Settlement Officer rejected their claim and argued that the collection of minor forest produce in reserve forests was only a privilege and not a right [56] It shows the fact that wherever the colonial state required tribals labour in forest conservation operations it had allowed their access to forests as rights However in most of settlements tribals' access was treated as a privilege or as a concession allowed to be exercised so long as the state permitted

While conducting the forest settlement process in the Matarkadapa reserve in Salem district the Forest Settlement Officer proposed a similar scheme In response to the claim by some of the tribals on the collection of minor forest products, the Forest Settlement Officer made it clear that the tribals' access to forests would be allowed only as a privilege and could not be treated as right [57] Thus, the forest usage pattern was given a new definition and the customary rights of peasants and tribals were converted into privileges or concessions which could be exercised at the mercy of the Forest and Revenue departments officials

The forest settlement process was slow in the tribal areas of the Andhra region because the survey and settlement of the forests became a hard task for the Madras Government for want of information In 1890 the Collector of Vizagapatam District informed the government that he could not undertake the forest reservation due to lack of clear information on land tenure pattern in the district He reported that the *Muttdars* and

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[56] *Ibid*

[57] Letter from the Forest Settlement Officer Salem District to the Secretary to the BOR 16th March 1886 No 210 in BORP 18th September 1886 F No 327

Moskahadars claimed the property rights on the forests proposed for reservation and created problems to forest settlement process As a result of this, the forest reservation process moved on slow pace in Vizagapatam district [58]

In the tribal areas, the forest settlement procedure was not conducted as prescribed in the Madras Forest Act of 1882 The reason attributed for this was that the tribals could not come with proper claims at the time of forest settlement due to lack of understanding of the procedure To address this problem, the Madras Government directed the Forest Settlement Officers to leave sufficient forest areas at the time of the forest settlement in the tribal areas In pursuance to this policy the Forest Settlement Officer in the Palakonda and Golgoada taluks of Vizagapatam informed that he had left sufficient forest land for the use of tribals at the time of forest settlement [59]

The reservation forests as state estates resulted in far reaching demographic changes and displaced tribals from their ancestral places For instance at the time of forest settlement some of the tribal villages were included in the reserved forests in the Antikonda reserves in Vizagapatam district Consequently, the tribals were forced to move out from their ancestral lands [60] In several other reserved forests the tribal habitations and villages were included For instance in the Dubbagunta reserve four villages were included in proposed reserved forest area [61] Besides several tribal hamlets were included in reserved forests The Forest Settlement Officer in the Karaka reserve in Vizagapatam district mentioned that several

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[8] BORP F No 130 28[t] April 1886
BORP F No 352 Miscellaneous 14 March 1894
BORP F No 451 9[t] July 1894
BORP F No 464 5[t] April 1894

villages were included in the reserved forests [67] However the Forest department was happy to keep the tribals inside the reserved forests because it required their labor in forest conservation operations and for the patrolling and fire tracing operations

While reserving the forest land in the tribal areas in Andhra region the settlement procedure that was prescribed in the Madras Forest Act of 1882 was not followed The main reason for this was these areas consisted of valuable timber trees one the one had and ecologically sensitive zones on the other Due to these reasons the Madras Government attempted to reserve hill forest tracts It justified the reservation on the ground that sufficient forest areas were left for the access to the tribals for continuation of their customary rights But in most cases the tribals failed to understand the demographic changes initiated by the forest reservation This has created serious problems at a later date

MANAGEMENT OF UNRESERVED FORESTS

For the management of forest landscape that was situated mainly in the agrarian regions in both plain and in hill areas in the form of mixed and minor forests, the Madras Forest Act of 1882 created the reserved lands category The main intention of the Madras Government in creating this category of reserve lands was to identify the forest lands suitable for reservation and generation of revenue from grazing Dr Brandis while mentioning the purpose of the reserves lands elucidated that

> As regards reserve lands the intention was by legislative enactment to guard against the alienation of lands which may hereafter be required for the formation of reserved forests There is no doubt that timely action in this respect is necessary The constitution of reserved forests must necessarily be a slow process and in many cases it can only gradually be decided, as the result of

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[67] BORP F No 297 9th May 1895

> protracted experience, what areas should be selected to be permanently maintained as forest But what can and should be done is to facilitate the formation in the future reserved forests by guarding against alienation the results of which might be to cut up the blocks and to render the formation such forests difficult or impossible [63]

For Dr Brandis therefore, the creation of the reserved lands category was meant for identifying suitable forest lands for future reservation Another objective behind the creation of the reserves lands was to control the alienation of waste and degraded forest lands for extension of cultivation The Madras Forest Act laid down a framework for the management of forest lands not covered under the natural or virgin forests, under the section 26 [64] Under this section the Conservator of Forests with the help of District Collector formulates rules for the management of forest lands that were not included in the reserved forests

The Board of Revenue proposed that the creation of reserves lands out of degraded forests areas and village commons were meant for creation of fuel and fodder reserves to meet the requirements of the agricultural population [65] However the intention of the Madras Government in creating the reserved lands was to pacify the conflict between the Forest and Revenue departments by granting equal controlling powers Accordingly the District Collector was empowered to formulate the rules for the reservation of these lands in consultation with the Conservator of Forests

Under the section 26 of the Madras Forest Act of 1882 the District Collectors were empowered to formulate the local rules for the management of village commons and minor

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[63] D Brandies *Suggestions Regarding Forest Administration* p 27
[64] *The Madras Forest Code* p 384
[65] G O No 671 Revenue 28th May 1883 in BORP 11th May 1883 No 1676 p 1

forest areas as reserve lands Some of the important rules formulated for management of these reserved lands in the North Circle were

- Rule 1 imposed regulations on issue of *Pattas* on the reserved lands without prior sanction of the Forest department
- Rule 2 imposes regulation on the collection of forest produce like timber and non timber forest products in the reserved lands except on payment
- Rule 3 imposed regulation on cattle grazing in the reserve lands and
- Rule 4 laid down the penalty and punishment procedure and proposed that any one who infringes these rules should be punished with one month imprisonment or penalty of Rs 200, or with both [66]

These rules were brought into force in most of the districts in the Northern circle Thus most of the forest landscape was brought under the strict bureaucratic control Similar rules were framed in the Southern Circle [67]

In 1884, the Madras Government had promulgated rules for the management of the reserved lands under the section 26 of the Madras Forest Act of 1882 Some of the important rules were as follows

- Rule 1 proposed that unassessed unclaimed *Banjar* and *Poromboke* lands should be surveyed and brought under the reserved lands
- Rule 2 imposed regulations on issue of land *Pattas* by the District Collectors on forest lands
- Rule 3 laid down the regulations on peoples access to the reserved trees except with the permission from the Forest department
- Rule 4 imposes restrictions on conversion of reserved lands for agriculture

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[66] Letter from the Collector of Anantapur District to the Conservator of Forests of Northern Circle 2 [d] April 1883 No 607 in BORP 14[th] June 1883 No 1723 p 4

[67] Rules Promulgated under the Section 26 of the Madras Forest Act of 1882 by the Governor in Council in *Ibid* pp 10 11

- Rule 5 Empowered the Board of Revenue and District collectors to grant temporary *Pattas* to people in reserved lands with the consent if the District Forest Officer,
- Rule 6 reserved certain timber trees like teak sandal black wood red sanders and other valuable trees a an exclusive property of the government for felling of these trees requires special permission from forest officers,
- Rule 7 was an important one that empowered District Collector to create village forests for the convenience of people
- Rule 8 empowered the government to create fuel and fodder reserves
- Rule 9 permits villagers to access grazing in their neighbouring forests with the permission of District Collectors
- Rule 10 declared that all waste and common lands with were not subjected to property rights belong to government
- Rule 11 empowered the Forest department to exercise control over village common lands
- Rule 12 prohibits peoples' access to reserved lands without permission
- Rule 13 laid down the procedure for obtaining permission to fell trees in reserved lands
- Rule 14 prescribe the amount to be paid by people for accessing forest products in reserve lands
- Rule 15 imposed penalties and punishment for violation of the rules with the punishment of one month imprisonment or Rs 500 rupees penalty or both [68]

Thus the rules promulgated under the section 26 of the Act empowered the Madras Government to exercise control over the forest lands that were not included in the natural and virgin reserved forests These rules mainly affected the plain presents whose agrarian economy depended mainly on the neighbouring forests and waste lands

[68] BORP 25th July 1884, No 2541 F 201 pp 1 7

In the Madras Presidency the forest reservation process was initiated in 1885 and completed by 1895 Thus, within ten years the Madras Government completed the reservation of 18,000 square miles of forest landscape spread over Telugu and Tamil speaking districts This forest land accounted for 35% of the whole unoccupied land at the disposal of the government in the Madras Presidency This process had also incorporated most of the village common lands and minor forests that were customarily used by people

In the course of time the Madras Government realised that the total extent of the forests brought under reservation had negatively affected the agricultural extension in some of the districts in the Madras Presidency The Government of India took cognisance of this problem and in 1894 instructed the Madras Government not to include the land fit for extension of agriculture in reserved forests Under this instruction the Madras Government followed a cautious policy of introducing the forest reservation in plain areas For instance, in Erode taluk of Coimbatore district the cultivable lands which were included under reserved lands excluded from reservation and given back to people.[69] In 1896, the District Collectors were instructed to abandon the reserved forests that were less than 3 000 acres in extent Under this scheme about 400 square miles of the reserved forests were set free from reservation.[70] It shows the pressure for the land for the extension of agriculture in the Madras Presidency This process also explains why the Revenue department was not in favor expansion of the forest conservation into those minor forests and waste lands hitherto available for extension of cultivation

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AARFD 1893 94, pp 2-3
AARFD, 1896 97, p 11

Pattern of Reserved Forest Expansion in Madras Presidency in square miles by 1910

Year	Reserve forest notified under the madras forest act in square miles	Reserve lands in square miles	Total forest cover under the control of the forest department in square miles
1892 93	7 174	9 403	16 577
1993 94	9 435	7 250	17 185
1894 95	11 466	7 324	18 790
1895 96	12 388	6 690	19 078
1896-97	13 138	5 796	18 907
1897 98	13 775	5 428	19 225
1898 99	14 888	4 706	19 594
1899 00	15 862	3 787	19 649
1901 02	16 589	2 952	19 541
1902 03	17 154	2 412	19 566
1903-04	17 923	1 798	19 555
1904 05	18 107	1 798	19 626
1905 06	18 228	1 297	19 585
1906 07	18541	1 079	19 620
1907 08	18 549	1 058	19 607
1908 09	18 694	8 76	19 570
1909 10	18 769	8 76	19 570

Source Compiled from the Annual administrative Reports of the Forest Department, Madras Presidency

The above table shows that by 1895-96 about 19 078 square miles of the forest landscape was brought under the legal and bureaucratic control of the Forest department in the Madras Presidency Between the years 1885 and 1890, though the forest reservation process was conducted slowly it picked up momentously after the 1890s The above table indicates a process by which the reserved forests notified under the Madras Forest Act of 1882 and these were under the exclusive control government This process incorporated most of the degraded forests and common lands till now accessed by the people in the Madras Presidency This resulted in alienation of people from the customary access to forests

DEBATES ON VILLAGE FORESTS

While the forest reservation was undertaken by the Madras Government, there was a debate on how to meet requirements of the people in forests in the Presidency Generally the village

forests mean a tract of forest land given for each village to enable the people for accessing forest produce. There was a prolonged debate between the governments of India and Madras on the nature of village forests to be created in the Madras Presidency. However, Dr. Brandis, the main architect of the Madras Forest Act, was not in favor of the creation of village forests. He also felt that the forest staff was not sufficient to carry out their management if separate system of village forests were created by the government.[71] It was because of Dr. Brandis that the Madras Government did not incorporate provision on village forests in its scheme of forest reservation.

Dr. Brandis argument did not completely discount the formation of village forests, to quote him, "Under the existing circumstances, all that can be attempted with reasonable prospect of success is to constitute reserved forests under the Act, and then to manage them by the government forest officers. Later on when experience has been gained and jungle in the plains has been determined by actual experience, then the project of village forests must be taken and if it should be found necessary to give such project the support of a legislative enactment, it will not be found difficult to frame such an enactment".[72]

Besides the colonial state's timber requirements, there was a pressing demand by the native population for grazing and fire wood in forests. Along with the forest reservation process itself the Madras Government contemplated to create the village forests to meet the grazing and fire wood requirements of the population in the Madras Presidency. Under the reserved land rules, the rule 7 had empowered the District Collector to create the village forests to meet the needs of the local population in forests. The Madras Government

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D. Brandis, *Suggestions Regarding the Forest Administration*, p. 26.
BORP, Land Revenue, 16th December 1890, F. No. 707, pp. 28-9.

proposed that ' Where the practice of grazing cattle sheep or goats, or of cutting trees (other then reserved trees) or other forest produce for fuel, or building agricultural or domestic purpose or of cutting grass for thatching or fodder or thorns for fences or leaves of trees (other than reserved trees) for manure free or charge has long and steadily obtained the Collector shall set apart once for all such areas as he may consider reasonable for this purpose [73] Thus the Madras Government gave some powers to the Revenue establishment to create village forests on the degraded and minor forests under rule 7 of the Madras Forest Act

At a time when the Madras Government was contemplating to create village forests two models were discussed within the bureaucratic circles in the Presidency The correspondence between the Conservator of Forests in Northern Circle and Cuddapah District Collector pertaining to the creation of village forests points toward the nature of this debate on village forests The Conservator of Forests defined the village forests as a limited area of good forest land to be handed over to the villagers for use under the village community management Furthermore he argued that the establishment of village forests furnishes supplies of necessary produce for village consumption [74] This recommendation indicates that the forest administration in India on rare occasions attempted to devolve forests management responsibilities to the local communities to reduce management burden on the department

The Cuddapah District Collector defined the village forests as all the forest lands out side the reserved forests He proposed that all the forest lands outside reserves should be

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[73] G O No 817 14[t] July 1885 in *Ibid* p 29
[74] *Ibid* pp 5 6

constituted as village forests Thus, there were two models discussed by the officials while creating village forests in the Madras Presidency

> 1) Constitution of village forests for each village as proposed by the Conservator of Forests
> 2) Creation of village forests by including all the forestlands outside reserve forests as proposed by the Cuddapah District Collector [75] The first model was implemented in Nilgiris district and the second model was grounded in the Cuddapah District

While discussing village forests the Collector of Nilgiri District mentioned two models on formation of village forests one the formation of small reserves for each village and the second was that taking up of the taluk as a unit for constitution of village forests [76] Implementation of the village forest experiment was first introduced in the Nilgiri District in 1885 Regarding the nature of village forests the Nilgiris District Collector proposed that

> The object of the constituting 'village forests is the free supply to the indigenous villagers (Badagas, Kothas Todas Irulars and Kurumbers) of wood for building or agricultural purpose, fuel, grass, fruits and similar produce, as wall as grazing for domestic cattle wherever possible The uses of village forests will as a rule, be enjoyed solely by the indigenous inhabitants of the village within such forests are situated' [77] While creating the village forests in Nilgiri district the Madras Government adopted the model of creating the village forests for each village managed by the Forest and Revenue departments together with people

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Ibid pp 6 7

Letter from the Collector of Nilgiri District to the Secretary to the BOR 21 November 1885 No 855 in BORP 5th May 1886 F No 234 p 6

[7] Subsidiary Rules for the Management of Village Forests under the Rule 7 of the Madras Forest Act *Ibid* pp 7 6

In 1885 the village forest rules under section 26 of the Madras Forest Act of 1882 were promulgated by the Madras Government for Nilgiri District These rules empowered the District Collector to create the village forests with the permission of the Board of Revenue In the village forests people were allowed to use the forest produce without payment for their domestic requirements but not for sale However the following regulations were laid down on peoples' access in village forests

1) Saplings and growing trees are not to be cut
2) Full- grown trees may be cut with the permission of the *Monigar* after he had inspected and marked the trees Great care should be taken in felling any gull grown tree not to injure young trees growing under it
3) No person shall graze or permit to be grazed in any village forests any goats (or buffaloes)
4) No person shall be allowed to cut more wood or gather more fuel grass fruit, &c , than permitted for his domestic use
5) Selling of any wood fuel and grass & gathered in a village is forbidden, except to persons entitled to cut or gather such wood fuel, grass, & under these rules
6) All disputes amongst villagers regarding the produce of village forests and appeals against refusal of the Monigars to grant a permit under rule 2 shall be settled by the village punchayet consisting of the Monigar, Currnam and three of the principal ryots of the village not concerned in the dispute or the matter in appeal [78]

Thus the village forest administration was partially given to the village *panchayats* in the Nilgiri District Subsequently this idea became popular and resulted in the constitution of forest *panchayats* in the Madras Presidency Thus while the village forest management in Nilgiri district was given to the District Collector the forest officers were only considered as advisors to the Collector The point to be noticed here is that the colonial state perceived the forest management as a part of land revenue management system and encouraged the Revenue department to exercise significant control over forest governance

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[8] *Ibid* p 6

However, the creation of village forests was not without any difficulties Regarding the difficulties in creating village forests, the Cuddapah District Collector noted that ' It will be extremely difficult to lay down equitability which village shall and which village shall not share in any given village forest It will not be possible in most cases to set apart a separate piece of forest for each village and the villagers to whom the privileges are granted will be certain to quarrel among themselves constantly regarding their use of the common forest [79] Thus apprehension was expressed by the Cuddapah District Collector about the problems associated with practical use of the areas under the village forests Knowing the fact that the creation of village forests in the plain districts was a difficult task the Madras Government instructed the Cuddapah District Collector to notify all unreserved lands under the rule 10 of the section 26 of the Madras Forest Act of 1882 In any case the Madras Government was not interested in adopting the village as a unit for creating village forests It attempted to meet the villagers' requirements under the section 26 of forest act However the following provisions were allowed in Cuddapah District

> a) All persons may cut and remove free of charges dry firewood for their own domestic use, but not for sale nor for the manufacture of jaggery or indigo or the preparation of turmeric
>
> b) Cultivating *ryots* and *Inamdars* may cut and remove free of charge the leaves of trees (other than reserved trees) for fencing their fields or for field platforms and may also cut and remove free of charge the wood of trees (other than reserved trees) for the manufacture of such agricultural implements as they may require and for buildings their own house or cattle sheds but not for sale or barter [80]

The Conservator of Forests in the Northern Circle in his correspondence to the Board of Revenue, initiated an elaborate discussion on the Bellary District Collector's scheme on

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[79] Letter from the Cuddapah District Collector to the Conservator of Forests North Division 15[t] December 1886 in BORP Land Revenue 16[th] December 1890 No 707 p 7

[80] *Ibid* pp 10-11

the village forests Under this scheme, the Collector divided the forest area into reserved and unreserved forests and proposed an area of 100 acres for each village to be set aside as village forests Though as a whole it was similar to that of the model implemented in Cuddapah district Since this model was found out to be simple in operation and demarcation involved less risk the Board of Revenue endorsed his proposals The Conservator of Forests in North Circle also accepted these proposals and proposed to extend them to Kurnool and Anantapur districts [81] These proposals marked an important turn in the village forest progress, for the Madras Government decided to create village forests on unreserved forests

The Madras Government while sanctioning the rules for creation of the village forests in Kurnool district proposed the following provisions to people

With out permit

(1) Grazing without restriction
(2) Collecting and removing (in head- loads only) dead-wood as firing
(3) Collecting and removing for manure leaves (of 4th-class trees only)
(4) Cutting and removing thorns for fencing
(5) Cutting and removing grass for thatching
(6) Taking leaves for plates
(7) Taking bark for fiber
(8) Collecting minor fruits
(9) Taking stone and earth for building [82]

Thus in some of the districts of the Presidency the village forests experiment was undertaken by the Madras Government At a time when this experiment was picking up momentum, the Madras Government started facing the problem of implementing forest reservation due to work burden involved in the creation and management of village forests

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[81] Letter from the Collector of the Kurnool District to the Conservator of Forests North Circle May 26th 1886 in *Ibid* p 13
[8] *Ibid* pp 13-14

Unfortunately this scheme of creating village forests had to wound up mainly due to a new scheme proposed by Mr Galtun, the Bellary District Collector He proposed that instead of dividing the forest lands into reserved and unreserved all forest lands should be reserved under the section II of the Madras Forest Act of 1882 and meet the requirements of people Under this scheme it was proposed that after reserving the forest lands, all neighbouring villages within the range of 10 miles should be given 100 acres each to meet their requirements

The Bellary scheme was accepted by the Conservator of Forests the Board of Revenue and the Madras Government [8] These recommendations were accepted mainly for two reasons one it was recognised that the creation of village forest for each village was impractical and two, the forest officials supported this scheme because it facilitate the expansion of forest reservation at quicker pace In 1890, the Madras Government announced its policy on the village forests, in which it was proposed that " The idea of village forests must be altogether abandoned, that it is desirable to have the sources of fuel and fodder supply under the Government control and to have the reserves in fairly large locks [84] Thus, earlier method of creating the state ownership on forests was brought back in full swing and the government succeeded in expanding its control over most of the village commons and waste lands in the Madras Presidency

Though the village forests scheme was abandoned the powers to constitute the grazing grounds and fuel reserves within the reserved forests were given to the District

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[8] *Ibid* p 30

[81] J A Vocher *Report on the Improvement of Indian Agriculture* (Originally published by the Government press Callutta 19893) Agri coal reprint Delhi 1986 p 162

Collectors. Thus the revenue establishment gained hold on the reserved forests. Not doubt the Madras Government had withdrawn the scheme on the village forests, yet it was continued to be debated. This debate in a way influenced the constitution of the village forest *panchayats* in the 20th century, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

In 1890, the Madras Government had initiated a major change in the policy on the forest reservation. Under this policy, the village forest scheme was abandoned. The state took the responsibility of providing the fuel and fodder requirements of population by conserving reserved forests.[85] The main objective of this policy was to expand the state control on the forests in the plain areas. Consequently, most of the forest and waste lands that were customarily used by plain peasants were brought under state control.

The policy adopted by the Madras Government in 1890 laid down procedure for creating and managing the fuel and fodder reserves in the Madras Presidency. Accordingly, reserved forests were divided into number of blocks, depending on their nature and yielding capacity. The District Collectors were instructed to report on the circumstances of their districts and collect information on the cattle census. Grazing in the reserved forests was regulated by imposing fee on each heads of cattle.[86] The grazing fee fixed by the government is as follows.

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[85] AARFD, 1891-92, p. 27.
[86] *Ibid*, p. 28.

Grazing Fee Collected in Reserved Forests in Madras Presidency

Grazing rates Per annum	Rs. A. P
Buffaloes	0 8 0
Bulls Cows Bullocks Claves Horses Asses and Foals	0 4 0
Sheep, cow, goats	0 2 0

Source: Annual Administrative report of the Forests Department, Madras Presidency 1891 p 28

The above table shows the high grazing fee that was imposed on agricultural cattle especially on buffaloes that were vital for agriculture in the form of ploughing, manuring carts and various other agricultural operations Impositions of fee on cattle grazing had severely affected the poor peasants in the plain areas

From 1882 to 1900, the Forest department mainly concentrated on the demarcation and settlement of reserved forests After completion of the survey and settlement of the reserved forests, the Forest department concentrated on the exploitation of the valuable forest resources After promulgation of the Madras Forest Act of 1882, the Forest Department in the Madras Presidency was able to show considerable revenue surplus mainly due to the fact that it imposed tax on all forest products and commercially extracted valuable wood from forests

Financial Transactions of the Forest Department in the Madras Presidency

Year	Revenue	Charges	Surplus
1882 83	9 03 914	6 36 558	2 67 356
1883 84	9 58 991	7 80 916	1 78 075
1884 85	11 62 689	8 84 421	2 78 261
1885 86	11 98 600	9 36 431	2 62 161
1886 87	12 46 738	11 55 687	91 096
1887 88	13 74 920	11 18 212	2 56 708
1888 89	15 15 006	12 16 624	2 98 332
1889 90	15 57 627	11 65 358	3 92 269
1890 91	17 95 408	12 53 284	5 42 124
1891 92	16 94 215	12 66 154	4 28 061
1892 93	15 77 212	13 30 258	2 46 954
1893 94	19 43 75	13 68 411	5 75 304
1895 96	21 67 630	14 68 980	6 98 642
1896 97	21 88 917	15 87 877	6 01 040
1897 98	21 51 144	15 88 489	562655
1898 99	20 75 254	21 79 284	4 83 105
1899 00	23 13 507	16 88 196	6 25 311
1900 01	24 43 773	17 38 190	7 05 383
1901 02	24 96 494	17 46 121	7 50 373
1902 03	25 92 779	18 26 555	7 66 224
1903 04	26 90 571	17 92 425	8 98 146
1904 05	28 30 542	20 84 480	7 46 062
1905 06	30 36 892	23 16 731	7 20 161
1906 07	34 50 733	25 86 566	8 64 176
1907 08	38 58 026	28 23 433	10 34 593
1908 09	38 86 296	29 64 076	92 22 20
1909 10	41 84 633	33 59 744	7 99 276
1910 11	NA	NA	NA
1911 12	42 37 795	34 46 441	10 76 614
1912 13	41 18 771	30 42 157	10 76 614
1913 14	40 48 842	28 40 942	12 07 900
1914 15	40 17 952	29 36 651	10 81 201
1915 16	39 38 475	26 07 949	13 80 526
1916 17	47 79 016	27 84 874	19 94 642
1917 18	54 16 496	29 19 596	24 96 900
1918 19	49 16 509	31 91 939	17 84 570
1919 20	59 53 910	35 16 428	24 37 482
1920 21	46 23 080	34 26 659	11 96 421
1921 22	47 96 900	48 42 366	45 466
1922 23	52 72 957	47 89 463	4 83 494
1923 24	54 86 936	46 29 514	8 57 449
1924 25	55 70 000	5 118 100	4 51900
1925-26	5 170 000	48 15 000	3 50 000
Average from 1926 29	54 58 562	48 97 612	5 50 950
1929 30	59 94 064	45 23 563	14 70 501
1930 31	46 83 394	42 79 861	4 03 563
1931 32	42 54 874	39 86 787	2 68 087

Year	Revenue	Charges	Surplus
1932 33	47 38 169	37 89 150	9 49 019
1933 34	39 43 068	39 20 340	22 728
1934 35	42 26 220	38 83 301	3 42 919
1935 36	42 89 611	40 74 358	2 15 253
1936 37	46 35 742	40 49 121	5 86 621
1937 38	48 57 341	40 95 373	7 61 968
1938 39	43 86 944	39 98 784	3 88 160
1939 40	4 292000	3 857000	4 35 000

Sources: Compiled from the Annual Administrative Reports of the Forest Department in Madras Presidency

The financial transactions of the Forest department detailed in the above mentioned table demonstrate the fact that there was a steady increase in the revenue from forest resources through the establishment charges also increased simultaneously What is important is that the revenue surplus has steadily increased at lest till 1919 1920 Especially after initiation of the working plan regime in 1900 the Forest department generated constant revenue surplus from its operations Thus the objective of the colonial state which had converted the forest resources from the common property resources to state revenue was fulfilled in the Madras Presidency This trend however got affected negatively during and after non-cooperation movement in the Madras Presidency (1920 22) However the noticeable fact is that after 1920s, the revenue surplus has declined mainly due to heavy investments incurred on the establishment charges like saw miles engineering branch and other timber logging machinery

After the 1900s Forest department concentrated on the Silviculture operations under the prescription of the working plan manuals that were formulated to carry out the conservation of valuable tree plantations to increase the timber production After reservation of forests the Forest department focused on revenue generation by implementing the

working plans The following table shows the nature of wood extraction undertaken by the Forest department in the Madras Presidency

Output of Timber Extracted by Forest Department in the Madras Presidency

Year	Tons of 50 cubic feet
1890 91	*329 414
1900 01	+64 469
1910 11	+60 829
1920 21	+98 540
1923 24	99 520
1924 25	99 080
1925 26	93 260
1926 27	94 140
1927 28	96 520
1928 29	100 480
1929 30	96 920
1930 31	85 580

Source G T Boagh The Madras Presidency, 1881-1931 Madras 1933, p 63

* This figure includes fuel
\+ Timber alone

The above table shows the steady over all increase in the timber quantity extracted by the Forest department despite variations from year to year Thus after completion of the reserve forest settlement, the department concentrated on Silviculture operations in valuable forest tracts that would generate income

In order to exploit the valuable wood and other forest produce in a more effective way, the Forest department adopted various scientific measures In 1923, a separate engineering branch was created on temporarily basis under a Chief Forest Engineer After 1925 about 3000 square miles of the plain forests were transferred to the direct management

of the Board of Revenue After this, the Forest department concentrated on Silviculture operations in the natural and valuable plantations for generating revenue from the forest resources in the Madras Presidency [87] Some of the measures undertaken for exploiting forests resources were as follows

1921-22	Russellkonda Saw Mill created
1922-23	Constitution of the Chenat Nair Exploitation division Appointment of Chief Forests Engineer and Forests Utilization Officer
1923-24	Chenat Nair Exploitation scheme Olvakkot Mill sanctioned
1923-25	Olavakkot Saw Mill and seasoning plat erected
1923-26	Sanction of Anamali sleeper project and creation of saw mill in Wynad
1923-27	Forests utilisation division and saw mills and extraction division formed [88]

The above mentioned measures were aimed at exploiting the forest resources not only to meet the requirements of the various government departments, but also to generate revenue from the logging of timber trees like teak, sandal wood, red sanders and other valuable timber trees

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[87] F P Stebbing *The Forests of India* Vol IV OUP London 1962 p 170
[88] G T Boagh *The Madras Presidency 1881 1931* Government Press Madras 1933 p 63

Outturn of Timber, Fuel, Bamboos and Minor Forest Produce in Madras Presidency

Year	Timber (Thousands Cu Ft)	Fuel (Thousand Cu ft)	Bombs (Thousand Rs)	Minor Forest Products (Thousand Rs)	Grazing (Thousand Rs)	Sandal Wood (Thousand Rs)
Average 1924-25 to 1928-29	4 777	18 763	385	803	753	939
1929 30 to 1933 34	3 559	19 494	393	644	621	538
1934 45 to 1938 39	3,495	17 837	300	584	587	635
1939-40	31,55	18,139	368	514	413	644
1940-41	3,478	19,282	374	586	415	*
1941 42	3,278	19,625	374	238	403	*
1942 43	5 197	29 827	*	*	*	*
1943 44	4 007	36 030	*	*	*	*
1944 45	3,680	37 888	*		*	*
1945 46	4,793	38,095	1 048	1,222	427	*
1946-47	3 251	32,435	1 365	1 090	643	40 16

Source: E P Stebbing, The Forests of India, Vol IV, Oxford University Press 1962 London p 185

* Data not available

The above mentioned table shows the timber extraction by the Forest department in the Madras Presidency The timber extraction if not on a steady increase was at least substantial in the Madras Presidency Initially grazing was an important item in the forest revenue but after hading over 3000 square miles of forests to the forest *panchayats* the revenue from grazing had declined At the same time the timber extraction had increased on an average over each decade It shows that after 1925 the Forest department concentrated on the Silviculture operations for increasing revenue from timber trees

Implementation of the Madras Forest Act of 1882 initiated significant changes in the forest landscape in the Madras Presidency By 1900s, most of the waste and forest lands were constituted as the state estates and peoples' access was strictly regulated Thus the colonial state's mission of bureaucratisation and legalisation of forest landscape for generation of revenue by alienation of people from accessing forests seems to be to a large extent accomplished in the Presidency The reservation of forest tracts especially in the plain area brought about the conflict between the Forest department and people The policy on the grazing and firewood provision for people resulted in massive public discontent The next chapter deals with the response of the people particularly from plain areas to the forest policies in the Madras Presidency

V

IMPACT OF FOREST POLICIES AND PEOPLE S' RESPONSE IN MADRAS PRESIDENCY

> In India, natural conditions are such that forests have played time immemorially an important part in the cultivation of the land. Dependence on the forests has formed an essential feature in the cultivation economy when therefore for the first time under British rule this mutual dependence of forests and cultivation was violated by upset. The cultivator felt like the fish out of pond and his agriculture was wounded.

The above words reflect the transformation that took place in the relationship between the people and forests during the British rule in India. Reservation of forests and common lands as state property and imposition of restrictions on access to forests curtailed peoples customary rights over forests. This process had created severe problems for tribal and peasant sections in accessing the forests in the Madras Presidency. The public discontent on forest policies was expressed in different forms such as petitions, violation of forest rules and killing of the forest subordinate staff. The present chapter narrates the strategies that were adopted by native people in opposing the forest policies and the nature of the colonial state s response in dealing them in the Madras Presidency. However, while analysing the impact of forest policies and peoples' response, emphasis is given on the contestations by the plain peasants to the interventionist policies adopted by the Madras Government in the management of forests which had curtailed their traditional access to the forests.

Imposition of restrictions on the customary access of people to forests by the British forest laws resulted in severe inconvenience to the rural poor. Some of the studies on Modern Indian history argue that the colonial forest policies imposed a heavy tax burden on forest

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S.G. Warty, "The Ryots and the Forests", *The Indian Forester*, Vol. LVII, No. 7, July 1931, p. 469.

products and resulted in impoverishment of the forest dependent communities in India[2] Some studies demonstrate the discontentment that was expressed by the people to the colonial forest policies during the national movement in Andhra However the public discontentment that was expressed on the forest laws during the national movements was only a manifestation of the accumulated grievances created by the government reservation of forests for commercial exploitation The present chapter would not deal with the forest protest movements rather focuses on the factors responsible for peoples grievances in accessing forests and forms of the public discontent that was expressed through the petitions the native newspapers and violation of forest rules An attempt is also made to analyse the strategies adopted by the colonial state in addressing the contestations of people against the forest laws in the Madras Presidency

The Madras Forest Act of 1882 declared forests and waste lands as state property and created state forest estates in the form of reserved forests These were managed under the supervision of the centralised bureaucratic structure with legal powers This process initiated the organised forestry in the Madras Presidency Under this the forests were allowed to be regenerated to meet the demands of various government departments and for revenue generation from forest products The main object of the organised forestry was to protect forests from the tribals living in the interior and the peasants in the vicinity of forests and to

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Sumit Sarkar *Modern India 1885 1947* Macmillan Reprinted Edition New Delhi 2001 p 45 A R Desai *Social Background of Indian Nationalism* Popular Prakashan Reprinted Edition Bombay 1994 p 59 Atluri Murali Civil Disobedience Movement in Andhra 1920 1922 The Nature of Peasant Protest and the Methods of Congress Political Mobilization in Kapil Kumar (ed) *Congress and Class Nationalism Peasant and Workers* Manohar Delhi 1987 pp 152 216 Sumit Sarkar Primitive Rebellion and Modern Nationalism A Note on Forest Satyagraha in the Non cooperation and Civil Disobedience Movement in K N Panikkar (ed) *National and Left Movement in India* Oxford University Press New Delhi 1980 M Venkatarangaiya (ed) *The Freedom Struggle in Andhra Pradesh* (Andhra) Vol III Government Press Hyderabad pp 36 37

extract the timber to meet the commercial and revenue interests of the colonial state[4] Thus the exclusion of the people from the access to forests with the rules sanctioned by law resulted in perpetual conflict between the Forest department and the people in the Madras Presidency

In order to document the native peoples opposition to the implementation of the colonial forest policies the present chapter relies on two sources that had documented the problems created by forest policies in the Madras Presidency one the petitions and memorials put forward by people to the government on the problems created by forest rules and second the contemporary newspaper reports which had thrown light on the impact of forest policies on socio economic conditions of the people in the Presidency The information is substantiated by the statistics documented in the Annual Administrative Reports of the Forest Department

The forest policies implemented by the Madras Government initiated transformation in the forest utilisation pattern of the people by imposing a heavy tax on forest products This process mainly affected tribals and peasants by restricting their customary access to forests This situation resulted in public discontentment on the forest policies in the Presidency The Madras Forest Committee appointed for enquiring into the grievances created by forest rules mentioned some of the difficulties experienced by the peasant communities in various districts in the Madras Presidency Those were proximity of reserved forest boundary to village habitation and cultivation fields, restrictions on access to water sources in reserved forests prohibition of access to grazing fire-wood and other forest products and the

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Akhileshwar Pathak *Contested Domain The State Peasants and Forests in the Contemporary India* Sage New Delhi 1994 p 20

corruption indulged by forest subordinate officials [5] The main problems experienced by the tribal people on the other hand, due to forest reservation were imposition of restrictions on shifting cultivation collection of minor forest products and access for hunting [6]

The main grievances however under the forest rules in the Presidency was the reservation of forests as state property and imposition of the restrictions on peoples access At the same time, the Madras Government did not formulate any policy on village forests which would provide the requirements of people from forests though that idea was sought to be implemented for a short period Consequently, there existed a consistent struggle between the Forest department and people in the Madras Presidency

FOREST RESERVATION AND RESPONSE FROM TRIBALS

The tribals in South India were traditionally depended upon forests for grazing fire wood collection of minor forest products food and shifting cultivation [7] The intervention by the colonial forest policies in the hill areas for exploitation of timber and other valuable resources initiated a transformation in tribal society [8] This transformation exposed the tribal areas for exploitation both by the Forest department and plain business people [9] In Madras the British Government treated the tribal access to forests as a concession that was allowed to be exercised so long as the government permits [10] Thus the immemorial traditional access of

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[5] *The Madras Forest Committee* Vol I Government Press Madras 1913 p 6

[6] A Ayappan *Report on the Socio Economic Conditions of Aboriginal Tribes of the Province of Madras* Government Press Madras 1948 pp 15 20
Ibid and Cristoph Von Furuer Himendorf *Tribes of India The Struggle for Survival* Oxford University Press Delhi 1994 p 79 R C Verma *Indian Tribes Through the Ages* Publication Division New Delhi 1977 p 92

[8] Buddadeb Chaudhuri (ed) *Tribal Development in India Problems and Prospects* Inter Indian Publication New Delhi 1990 p xiii
Kavita Philip *Civilising Natures Race Resources and Modernity in Colonial South India* Orient Longman New Delhi 2003

[1] Stephen Fuchs *The Aboriginal Tribes of India* McMillan India Delhi 1973 p 244

tribals to forests was defined as the concessions or privilege permitted by state not as right evolved over centuries of dependency as the eco system For instance in the pre colonial South India the state appears to have recognised tribals rights over their eco system [11]

Prior to the intervention of the colonial state the hill areas in the Andhra region were managed by the *Muttadaras* who were the hereditary hill chiefs Due to harsh environmental conditions and lack of communication the British could not acquire control over these areas [12] The *Muttdars* though imposed a small tax on cultivated lands but did not disturb the traditional relationship between tribals and forests [13] Penetration of the colonial rule through forest policies exposed the tribal areas to wider exploitation both by state and plain traders After realising the potential of resources in the hill areas, the colonial state initiated its efforts to acquire control over these areas However the state attempts were resisted by the *Muttadars* There were series of revolts against the British intervention occurred in Vizagapatnam and Gnajam districts between the years 1830 and 1840 [14] In spite of revolts the British gradually acquired control over tribal areas by promulgating the Act of XXIV of 1839 Under this Act, the hereditary rights of *Muttadars* were disallowed This process resulted in sever discontent on the British intervention in tribal areas [15]

After realising the potential of forest resources the colonial state imposed restrictions on tribals' access to forests particularly *podu* cultivation which was a main livelihood source

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Atluri Murali Whose Trees? Forest Practices and Local Communities in Andhra 1600-1922 in David Arnold and Ramachandra Guha (ed) *Nature Culture and Imperialism Essays on the Environmental History of South Asia* OUP New Delhi 1996 pp 50 86 Himendorf *Tribes of India* p 80

M S R Anjaneyalu Visagapatnam District A History of the Relations Between the Zamendars and East India Company Andhra University Vizagapatnam 1969 p 65

B Reddey Prasad Reddy *Tribals in Revlot A Study of the Rampa Uprisings of 1979* Unpublished M Phil thesis submitted in University of Hyderabad Hyderabad 1987 p 28

[14] P Kamala Mohan Rao and D L Prasad Rao Tribal Movements in Andhra Pradesh in K S Singh (ed) Tribal Movements in India Vol 2 Monohar New Delhi 1982 pp 353 372

[15] B Reddy Prasad Reddy *Tribals in Revolts* p 69

for tribes was restricted in the Agency Areas in 1879.[16] Thus restrictions on *Muttadars* hereditary rights on the one hand and tribals' discontentment due to the restrictions on *podu* on the other manifested in a massive tribal uprisings in Rampa areas of Godavari district in 1879-1880.[17] This shows that the British intervention and imposition of restriction on tribals access to forests created grievances in tribal society. In this context, introduction of organised forestry and imposition of the state monopolistic control over forests in tribal areas led to deprivation of tribals.

Due to lack of literacy, the tribal people could not represent their grievances related to accessing forests in the form of petitions. However, there were few petitions by the tribals on their grievances submitted to government authorities that were preserved in the Board of Revenue Proceedings. For instance, some of the *Chenchus* tribals from Kistna district submitted a petition on 10th October 1888, to the District Collector on severity of forest rules. They informed that for generations, they depended on the collection of minor forest produce like tamarind, honey, sop-nuts, etc., as the main source of for livelihood. They also complained abut the harassment by the forest subordinate officials, who frequently confiscated the forest products, gathered by tribals and demanded bribe for allowing them into forests. In response to their petition, the Board of Revenue instructed the District Collector to probe into this issue. The Collector, reporting to the government, suggested for employment of the *Chenchus* in collection of minor forest products, hunting material and cattle grazing without any tax. He also proposed that the *Chenchus* should be employed as

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Ibid, p. 65. A. Satyanarayana, Socio-Economic Origins of the Rampa Rebellion 1878-80, *Andhra Pradesh History Congress Proceedings*, 38th Session, Vijayawada, 1978.
David Arnold, 'Rebellious Hillman': The Gudem-Rampa Risings, in Ranajit Guha (ed), *Subaltern Studies: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, Vol. I, Oxford University Press, 1982, pp. 82-142.

watchers in reserved forests[18] Whether such sweeping concessions were given to the *Chenchus* is not clear, but the policy of taming tribals to utilise their labour in forest conservation operations could be seen in Madras

Regarding the employment of tribals in forest conservation operations the Conservator of the Forests in Northern Circle informed the government that in Kurnool and Kistna districts special arrangements were made by the Forest department to employ the *Chenchu* tribals in the conservation operations that were undertaken in reserved forests In Nellore and Cuddapah Districts the *Yenadi* tribals were employed in the protection of reserved forest as watchers[19] Attempts were also made to employ tribals in the forest conservation operations

With the initiation of forest reservation the tribals living in the forest zones were uprooted from their traditional economic system and relocated as labour force in the Forest department In 1890, the Madras Government undertook the reservation of 1000 square miles of forest area in Godavari district While writing about the forest settlement in the Godavari region the Working Plain for Godavari forests pointed out that Although these hill tribes possessed few sustainable rights over forests they had from time immemorial enjoyed and abused an unrestricted freedom to fell clear and burn whatever they chose and for political reasons it was considered necessary to deal with them cautiously[20]

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[18] Memorial by the Chenchus 10th October 1888 No 707 Miscellaneous in Board of Revenue Proceedings Land Revenue 7th February 1889 Forest No 86

[19] Annual Administrative Report of the Forest Department in Madras Presidency (hereafter *AARFD*) Government Press Madras 1889 p 6

[20] R B Corwell *Working Plan for the Godavari Lower Division 1934 44* Government Press Madras 1937 p 28

By reserving hill forests and imposing restrictions on tribals access to forests the Forest department interfered in day to day life of the people in the Godavari Agency area. In 1893 the Agent of Godavari District endorsed a petition put forward by some of the hill men on their grievances related to forests to the Board of Revenue. He reported to the government that interference of the Forest department's staff in tribal areas created troubles for tribals. In response to the Agent's report the Board of Revenue strictly warned the forest officers not to interfere in day to day life of tribals.[1] The Madras Government's careful policy towards tribals should however be seen in the context of frequent revolts against the colonial state's intervention in their areas right from the mid 19th century.[22]

Imposition of restrictions on the shifting cultivation which was an important livelihood activity for tribals created serious problems and resulted in anti government feelings among the tribals. Some of the tribals from Coimbatore district complained to the Board of Revenue that most of the lands that were available for shifting cultivation in their villages were included into reserved forests. They informed that these lands were the only source for their sustenance and requested the Board of Revenue to exclude them from reservation. The Board of Revenue ordered the Collector to conduct an enquiry into this matter. The Collector reporting to government on this issue pointed out that the lands claimed by the petitioners were the government property and could not be given for shifting

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1 Letter from the Conservator of Forests Northern Circle 30th August 1893 No 652 in BORP L R Ms 50 August 1893 F No 655

V N V K Sastry and K V Subba Reddy *Evolution of Scheduled Areas and Changes in Muttadi System in Andhra Area 1724 1900* Tribal Cultural Research and Training Institute Hyderabad 1991 David Arnold *Rebellious Hill Men* B Reddy Prasad Reddy *Tribals in Revolt*

cultivation However he suggested for employment of tribals in forest conservation operations especially in plantation activities [23]

In 1902 a memorial was submitted by some of the tribal people from Coimbatore district to the Board of Revenue They complained that after reservation of their neighbouring forests and imposition of restrictions on access to collection of leaves fruits herbs honey fuel and other forest products deprived their livelihoods The Board of Revenue instructed the District Forest Officer to probe into this issue After an enquiry he accepted that the subordinate officials of the Forest department created troubles for tribals by demanding bribe and imposing severe punishments However he suggested for employment of tribals in the collection of minor forest products under the supervision of the contractors prescribed by the Forest department He also proposed that forest lands should be allocated for tribes for shifting cultivation on a condition that they should work in forest conservation operations and cooperate with forest guards in fire tracing boundary clearing and patrolling activities [24] Thus the contestation was between the tribes longing to continue with their traditional livelihood pattern and the colonial state interests in shifting the tribals into a new labour force on the payment of wage

One of the important means of livelihoods for the tribals in the Andhra region was the *podu* cultivation practised for subsistence needs Prior to reservation of forests the tribals enjoyed considerable freedom to undertake *podu* cultivation in hill areas It was restricted by government after reservation of hills for exploitation of timber In order to acquire forests

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Petition from the tribals from Coimbatore District in BORP L R Mis 15 December 1900 I No 6 9

[4] BORP L/R Mis 20 September 1902

Atluri Murali Alluri Sitarama Raju and the Manyam Rebellion of 1922 1924 *Social Scientist* Vol 12 No 4 April 1982 p 57

for silviculture plantations the Forest department imposed restrictions on the *podu* in reserved forests For instance, in Andhra region, strict regulations were imposed on the practice of *podu* cultivation in reserved forests in 1905 The Godavari District Commissioner prohibited the *podu* cultivation within the 100 yards of reserved forest boundary It was argued by the forest officials that Not only were large areas of forest destroyed for *podu* but escape fire from the burnt clearings swept over many square miles of forests every year Therefore for conservancy to be thorough it was necessary to exclude all podu cultivation from the limits of the reserved forests and to curtail the privilege of the hill tribes within such areas" [26] Thus, regulation on *podu* cultivation was justified with the arguments that unless it should be prohibited forest conservancy was not possible However in some cases the Forest department allowed tribals to live in reserved forests and practice *podu* cultivation on the conditions that they should work for the Forest department [27] In other words wherever, the colonial state required labour in the interior forests they followed a policy of extracting tribal labour This however, does not mean that the state was not putting restrictions on traditional livelihood patterns of economic activities, as it shows in several works [28]

The nationalist intelligentsia also responded to *podu* issue For instance M V Ramamurti the president of the Parvatipuram Taluk Congress Committee pointed out that

Most of the hill men live on what is known as *Podu* or shifting cultivation Dry crops are

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Godavari Working Plan p 28
BORP L/R 30th November 1906 F NO 1765
[8] Atlury Murali *Alluri Sitarama Raju the the Manyam Rebblion* M P R Reddy *Peasant and State in Modern Andhra History* Cilo Kavali 1979 p 158 V Raghavaiah Sreerama Raju's Uprisings 1922 24 in A R Desai (ed) *Peasant Struggle in India* OUP Bombay 1979 p 294 O Kamala Manohar Rao and D Prasad Rao *Tribal Movements in Andhra Pradesh* p 355 M L Kanta Rao *Forest POlicy and its Impact A Case Study of the Andhra Costal Agency Area 1860 1900* Unpublisged M Phil thesis submitted in University of Hyderabad 1993 p 92

raised and the yield is very much less that from the plain dry lands Herein they come into conflict with forest authorities of the Zamindars These slopes or tracts on hill sides thrown back on other sources of living as coolies etc this is a problem which requires careful consideration [29] Thus the *podu* cultivation which was an important livelihood means of tribals was restricted by the Forest department Unlike the plain peasants the tribals could not articulate their grievances in the form of written petitions They demonstrated the discontent on forest rules in the form of burning reserved forests and attacking subordinate forest staff For instance reserve forests in Dharakonda and Sanivaram in Vizagapatam district were burnet by tribals in opposition to regulations imposed by government on *podu* cultivation [30] These sporadic protests some times brought concessions to the tribes by way of the government relaxing rules and allowing concession to hill man For instance the tribals living nearby the reserved forests of Dharakonda and Sanivaram in Vizagapatam district were given concessions for grazing and *podu* [31] Of course, these concessions were often cancelled under the pretext of disloyalty of tribals to the Forest department For instance, the concessions granted to tribes in Ganjam district were cancelled under the pretext of disloyalty of tribes to the Forest department [32]

In spite of government concessions tribals continued to violate the forest rules which had restricted their very means of livelihood For instance in Vizagapatam district 3,000 acres of reserve forests were damaged by tribals in Kondasantha village by putting fire [33] The *Khond* tribals live in Ganjam and Vizagapatam districts frequently engaged in burning

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A Aiyappan *Report on the Socio Economic Conditions of the Aboriginal Tribe of the Provinces of Madras* p 15

AARFD, 1908 1909 p 11

Ibid p 14

AARFD, 1912 13 p 8

AARFD 1914 1915 p 18

reserved forests for practicing *podu* and thus created problems to the Forest department Thus the legitimacy of the forest rules was questioned by the tribals by violation of rules and damaging reserved forests It was this necessity that compelled the colonial state to incorporate the contestations of people for accessing forests if not as a general policy at least as case by case basis For instance, in Godavari district the *Koyas* and the *Konda Reddy* tribals were given concessions for accessing forests on the condition that they should help forest officials in fire tracing and other conservation operations in reserved forests.[34] The major problem that created hostile relations between the Forest department and tribals was the harassment by forest guards and watchers for such interference undermined the tribals in day-to-day life The Madras Government took cognisance of this problem and cautioned the District Collectors to minimise the harassment by lower forest officials[35] Thus the exploitation of forest resources for market needs and imposition of restrictions on tribals access to forests generated discontent on government machinery among tribals in the Andhra region This discontent was expressed during the post non-cooperation movement under the leadership of Alluri Sitarama Raju[36]

The rebellion that took place under the leadership of Alluri Sitarama Raju in tribal agency areas gave massive jolt to the British Government In the course of this rebellion tribals have attacked the police stations that considered as the symbols of the state authority and damaged the prestige of British Government to a considerable extent This situation compelled the colonial state to follow a careful policy in taming tribals In 1931 a special

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[4] AARFD, 1908 09 p 33
[5] AARFD 1912 13 p 21
Atlury Murali *Alluri Sitarama Raju and the Manyam Rebellion*

establishment was created for welfare of the Chenchu tribals in Andhra [37] But the Forest department's efforts in utilising tribals as cheap labours in reserve forest works and restrictions on *podu* cultivation continue to create tensions between tribals and the Forest department For instance in 1931 three forest guards and two were murdered by tribals [8]

The colonial forest policies implemented in the tribal areas had initiated far reaching changes the colonial sate attempted to convert the tribals into cheap labour force to be employed in the reserved forests As the new pattern of work which was unfamiliar to tribals they resisted the initiatives by the Forest department At the same time, the Forest department imposed strict restrictions on *podu* cultivation which was an important source for livelihood Therefore tribals on the one hand lost their traditional livelihood source and on the other became cheap labour employed by the Forest department and plain based merchants Thus the colonial forest policies deprived the livelihoods of tribals and exposed the tribal areas to wider exploitation both by the government machinery and plain based merchants

FOREST RESERVATION AND RESPONSE FROM PLAIN PEASANTS

Traditionally peasants' life depended on forests for fire-wood wood for agricultural implements leaf manure grass and leaves for grazing animals and other forest products that were essential for agricultural operations In that way the peasants in the plain areas accustomed to exercise customary access to neighbouring forests [9] Imposition of state control over forests in the form of reservation to cater to the timber needs of the government departments had a negative impact on the peasants customary access to forests This situation created inconvenience to peasants and generated discontent on the forest policies

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[7] Proceedings of Chief Conservator of Forests (hereafter PCCF) No 459 October 1932 p 18
[8] PCCF 1931 p 37
[9] Atlury Murali *Civil Disobedience Movement in Andhra* p 157

that were implemented in the plain areas in the Madras Presidency The peasants discontent on forest rules was expressed in the forms of violations of forest rules and submission of petitions to the government authorities

The initial response of plain peasants to the restrictions on forest access was legalistic in character they submitted petitions to the government authorities Most petitions by peasants points three important issues one the nature of the customary access to forests that had existed in neighbouring forests prior to the implementation of the Madras Forest Act of 1882 two the crisis created by the government reservation of forests and common lands and three demand for restoration of customary access The petitions by the plain peasants on the severity of forest rules not only mentioned the general grievances, but also reflected the peasants contestations for accessing resources in the forests and commons in the plain areas in the Madras Presidency Initially, the petitions by peasants on the grievances related to forest access were not influenced by the nationalist political mobilisation against the colonial rule rather, they were the reflections of the grievances that were created by the regulations on access to forests It was only during the national movement, after 1920 that the violation of forest rules became a part of the anti colonial movements The following section demonstrates the nature of peasant protest against forest rules in the form of petitions and violation of forest laws in the pre-1920s era

The petition submitted by some of the *ryots* of Salem district to the Board of Revenue illustrates the perception of peasants on the regulations imposed by forest laws in Madras They argued that forest reservation should confine to hills and dense forests in order to protect physical climate and irrigation sources They criticised the government policy on

reservation of forests and waste lands in plain areas and argued that it was this policy that deprived them from accessing grazing, fire wood and wood for agricultural implements in neighbouring forests Commenting on the nature of inconvenience created by the forest rules they argued that to quote

> That contrary to the immemorial custom of ages by which the ryots have been permitted to graze their cattle upon the common plain they are now hand-cuffed from the enjoyment of their rights of common The Shepard and the cow-hard are told that it is trespass to tree and upon ground where their father tended sheep or cows To their vexation and bewilderment are they told that fines and punishments will be their rewards for the troubles of grazing cattle on the forbidden grounds Owing to the vicinity of Reserves to their villages it unfortunately happens that whenever cattle stray out they are found in the Government Reserves The result is that the owners are either prosecuted or forced to pay a heavy penalty by way of compensation This is a source of great annoyance which is growing almost intolerable [40]

The main reason for the grievances related to forest access in the Madras Presidency was the reservation of forests as a government property in plain areas wherein villagers were habituated to access graze, fire-wood and other forest products without any tax In Salem district forest reservation and restrictions on the peoples' access resulted in public discontent and violation of forest rules The following table shows the nature forest crime in Salem district

Forest Offences Committed in Salem District

Year	Illicit removal	Illicit grazing	Fires	Other offences	Total
1890 91	499	199	10	39	747
1900 01	1 409	1 144	11	28	2 592
1910 11	901	325	109	51	1 386
1913 14	1 786	309	95	87	2 367

Source F J Richards, Madras District Gazetteer Salem District Gazetteer Madras Vol I 1918 Madras p 258

[4] Petition from the ryots of Salem District in BORP L/R Mis 19 July 1889 F No 686

The above mentioned table shows nature of the offences committed by people against the forest rules in Salem district wherein the so-called 'illicit removal' topped the list of offence The forest crimes that were committed by people were the manifestation of their discontent on the forest laws which had created new space in the form of reserved forests by excluding their traditional access to forests The main reason for increase in forest crime by 1900s was because most the waste and forest lands in Salem district i e about 800 square miles were reserved and brought under the control of the Forest department [41] Having lost customary access to the neighbouring forests and commons, people expressed discontentment by violating the forest rules in Salem district

The forest reservation undertaken by the Madras Government in plain areas exercised a negative impact on agriculture sector The memorial submitted by the *ryots* from Coimbatore district to the government illustrates the impact of forest policies on agriculture sector They complained that due to forest reservation and restrictions on access to neighbouring forests there was a decline in cattle wealth Criticising the forest reservation they wrote that 'The Government pretends as if it assists the cultivators in the forests framing the nominal Act and rules with the intention of spoiling the inhabitants by making the reserves for the gradual improvement of the forest By doing so there is no place for the protection of the cattle for the firewood for extension of agriculture If the cultivators were to pay taxes for firewood and other requirements there will be no room to cover up by produce obtained from the land once year for maintenance revenue and other taxation [4]

They also informed that after reservation of neighbouring forests, they were subjected to high

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C D MacLean *Manual of the Administration in the Madras Presidency* Vol 2 Asian Educational Service New Delhi 1985 p 324

[4] Memorial from *ryots* of Coimbatore District BORP L/R Mis 28th April 1891 F No 396

grazing tax The anguish is expressed to the government in the following lines " how long a man can alive in the world neither sitting nor standing and what sort of injustice time is this It should be better on the Government to drive out all the inhabitants to the foreign domain than trouble them "[43] Though this narration sounds exaggeration it certainly reflects the severity of crisis related to peoples access to forests due to implementation of the government reservation in forests

In some of districts most of the accessible forests and waste lands were incorporated into reserved forests and this has resulted in severe inconvenience to people For instance, the main reason for forest grievances in Coimbatore district was that most of forests and waste lands were brought under reservation The total area of district was 8,600 square miles out of which waste and forest lands accounted for 3836 square miles Out of this 2304 square miles of forest and waste lands were reserved as state forests strictly restricting peoples access[44] Thus most of forest and waste lands were occupied by the government in the name of the reservation and denied access to people

Due to reservation of forests and waste lands in plain areas peasants were put in severe inconvenience in accessing forests In a memorial put forward by the *ryots* from Vizagapatam district they complained that due to reservation of neighbouring forests grazing for cattle sheep and goats became a severe problem They complained that due to reservation of forests and imposition of tax on grazing they were unable to keep sheep and goats consequently availability of manure became a problem for them They reported that

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[43] *Ibid*
[44] AARFD, 1892-1893

without goat and sheep they cannot get good yield in their fields [45] The nature of impact that the forest policies had on agriculture sector grazing and pastoralism in the Madras Presidency was a quite telling tale

In the dry districts the reservation of forests process undertaken by the Madras Government had resulted in serious trouble for *ryots* Some of the *ryots* from Kurnool district submitted a memorial to the Board of Revenue where they complained that the reservation of forests and imposition of regulations in accessing their neighbouring forests had severely affected the agriculture sector They requested the government for relaxing the severity of forest rules and restoration of their customary access in neighbouring forests [46] Thus in most of the petitions the peasants from plain areas consistently demanded restoration of the customary access to forests that existed prior to implementation of the Madras Forest Act of 1882

In some of the dry districts, the people reacted to the restrictive forest rules by attacking forest guards and petitioning to District Collectors on their grievances For instance in the Cuddapah district, one forest guard and one fire patroller were killed in 1892 In the same year a watchman and his father were killed in the Sashachelem range [47] The *Gumasta* who issues permits in reserved forests in Cuddapah district was beaten up severely by the people In the South Arcot district some of the forest watchers were attacked by people In the Madura district people killed a watchman [48] There are two reasons responsible for these killings one due to low salaries the subordinate staff of the Forest department indulged in high corruption and second people perceived the forest guards and watchers as

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Petition from the *ryots* of Vizagapatam District BORP I /R 21 November 1892 I No 1264
Petition from *ryots* of Kurnool District BORP I /R Mis 12 April 1892 I No 392
[47] AARFD 1892-93 p 19
[48] AARFD 1893-94 p 21

carriers of restrictive forest policies which had undermined their very means of livelihood depended on the forests. Thus these violent incidents were manifestations of peoples discontent on the forests policies that were implemented in the Madras Presidency.

Bedsides these several petitions on forest grievances were presented to government authorities. For instance the Anantapore District Collector received numerous petitions from different parts of the district on forest grievances. He suggested the following measures to mitigate the forest grievances.

> 1) *Ryots'* cattle should be allowed to graze in adjourning hills and no fee should be levied on this privilege.
> 2) Ryots should not be prevented from taking small quantity of wood for agricultural implements from the neighbouring forests.
> and
> 3) People should be allowed to collect fire-wood without any taxation in neighbouring forests.

The District Collector of Anantapore informed the Board of Revenue that the tax imposed on the forest products in reserved forests had became a burden to people and this has resulted in unnecessary conflicts with government machinery. He suggested that the Guntkal reserves should be given up for cultivation, as it did not have good tree growth. Furthermore he suggested that forest and waste lands in plain area should not be reserved unless they posses valuable tree growth.[4] He felt that the Forest department operations should be confined to uninhabited forest tracts. Thus to some extent, the District Collectors attempted to restrict the powers of the Forest department in plain areas by favouring peoples requirements in forests.

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[4] Letter from the Collector of Anantapore District to the Secretary to the BOR, BORP, L/R, 8th April 1896, F. No. 508.

The main reason for public discontent on forest rules was that though the Madras Forest Act of 1882 proposed an elaborate procedure to meet the requirements of people on many occasions the Forest Settlement Officers did not allocate adequate alternative forest lands for peoples use Some of the *ryots* from Udayagiri taluk in Nellore district complained that most of the area in neighbouring hills was reserved by government without leaving any unreserved forest land to meet their requirements They reported that due to reservation of accessible forests they could not obtain forest products that were necessary for agriculture Thus in some instances reservation of accessible forests and waste lands deprived the plain peasants of their customary access to forests

In some instances incorporation of village common lands into reserved forests category resulted in severe hardship to people Some of the *ryots* from Kundoi Shlolpad and Veerenoi villages of Salem district complained to the Board of Revenue that due to inclusion of neighbouring forest area into the reserved forests they were put to hard troubles The *ryots* informed that from generations they were accustomed to use neighbouring forest tracts for grazing collection of leaves for manure, wood for building and for other purposes They also complained that the reserved forest boundary was situated close to the village and consequently their cattle frequently entered into reserved forest areas in spite of careful vigilance [51] Thus on some occasions most of the village waste lands were brought under the reservation as a result of which villagers were forced to pay fee for forest products

The commercialisation of forest resources by introducing permit system for accessing forest products in reserved forests created crisis in plain areas The petition put forward by

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Memorial from *ryots* of Nellore District BORP L R Mis 5th November 1900 F No 649
Petition from the *ryots* of Salem District BORP L R Mis 7 November 1901 F No 670

ryots of Viligonda taluq in Kistna district illustrates this crisis. They informed that prior to reservation of forests, they were not subjected to any grazing tax, but after the government taking over of forests, they were forced to pay fee for grazing. They complained that most of grazing grounds were reserved and subjected to a heavy grazing tax[52]. Prior to implementation of forest reservation, small peasants were not subjected for tax on grazing and depended on neighbouring forests and waste lands for grazing. Imposition of grazing tax after reservation of forests compelled them to pay for grazing. This situation generated severe crisis in the countryside of the Madras Presidency.

Thus, cattle grazing became one of the pressing problems to be handled by the Forest department. In 1897, the Madras Government issued rules for the regulation of grazing in reserved forests. Under these rules, the District Collectors were empowered to divide the reserve forests into several grazing blocs, in order to regulate and provide grazing facility to people[53]. However, grazing continued to be a pressing problem due to the fact that its availability depended upon seasons. For instance, in the rainy season the peasants did not have a problem for grazing, but in summer they had to send cattle to interior forests for grazing. After reservation of forests, the facility of grazing in the interior forests was restricted and was regulated with the imposition of the permit system. Under this regulation, the people were required to pay fee for accessing grazing in reserved forests. Consequently, these forest rules were universally hated by people in the Madras Presidency.

While describing the problems that were experienced by the people due to forest rules in North Arcot district, the District Collector informed the Board of Revenue that he had

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[52] Memorial from the *ryots* of Kistna District, BORP, L/R, Mis. 19, May 1904, F. No. 445.
[53] Rules issued by the Madras Government, BORP, I/R, Mis. 19, 1 May 1904, F. No. 445.

received several petitions from *ryots* on the hardships caused by forest rules He ascribed the problems associated with reservation of forests close to villages and inclusion of wells tanks and village common lands into reserved forests[54] This situation resulted in severe inconvenience to the people in North Arcot district The discontent on forest rules was expressed in the form of violation of forest rules

Forest Crime in North Arcot District

Year	1888 89	1889 90	1890 91	1891 92	1892 93
Cases	179	255	334	700	844

Source Arthur F Cox Madras District Manuals North Arcot, Madras 1894 p 223

The above table shows a steady increase in forest crime rate in North Arcot district In spite of strict policing system under the supervision of the Forest department the people continued to violate forest laws The implementation of the forest policy sanctioned by the Madras Forest Act of 1882 and the denial of peoples access to forests had resulted in severe problems The violation of forest laws became a common feature in many parts of the Madras Presidency

The reservation of forests and waste lands in plain areas created severe problems for peasants When the Governor of the Madras Presidency visited Kurnool district some of the *ryots* submitted complaints on the hardship caused by the forest rules The grievances they spelled out were

[54] Letter from the Collector of North Arcot District BORP L/R Mis 26[1] March 1903 F No 185

1) Reserve boundary line was marked close to village habitation sites and water sources were included within the reserved forests for which they were denied access

2) Goats and sheep were not allowed to graze in reserves

3) Grazing fee was very high Earlier people used to pay for every hundred beasts after reservation of forests it was made for every ten beasts and

4) Wanted license for goats and sheep for grazing in reserved forests

5) They wanted ploughing cattle to be allowed into reserved forests without any tax they also demanded that in the beginning of the rainy season for about four months government should provide free grazing for their cattle

6) They wanted fire-wood and wood for agriculture implements without any tax from reserved forests

7) They demanded for permission to manufacture charcoal in reserved forest in small quantities for domestic purpose

8) They demanded exclusion of the water resources such as ponds and tanks which were included in reserved forests

9) They wanted license for stones and clay from reserved forests and also demanded for thorns to fence fields and building cattle sheds at free of tax

10) They wanted leaf manure at free of charges from reserved and unreserved forests and

11) Finally, they demanded that waste lands which were close to village habitation should not be reserved [1]

Thus the plain peasants consistently put forward demands for access in reserved forests But this demand can not be met so easily due to two reasons At one level under the agricultural expansion most of the minor or degraded forests and waste lands in plains were converted into private property At the other end the Forest department reserved the remaining waste lands as state property for generating revenue This duel process has resulted in heavy shrink in the availability of minor forests and waste lands which were the source of grazing fire wood and other essential forest products for people

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[1] Petition from the ryots of Kurnool District BORP L/R Mis 22 April 1904 P No 358

A petition from some of the *ryots* of Kistna district, in the year 1907 brought to the attention of the government that they have 348 acres of *poromboke* land to meet the fire wood and grazing requirements But this land they complained was reserved by the Forest department The department not only reserved this land but also included an additional 517 acres of land that was available for extension of cultivation in the reserved forest They pleaded that the lands included in reserved forest should be given to them for cultivation [56] This petition demonstrates that the plain peasants were in need of not only minor on forests and waste lands but also areas for the extension of cultivation as it was one of the pressing problems to the peasants Therefore, the peasants contested with the Forest department for both the degraded forest zones and *poromboke* lands adjacent to the village settlements

Another petition on similar lines was put forward by the *ryots* from the Villupalai taluk in South Arcot district They complained to the Board of Revenue that after reservation of their neighbouring forest lands, they did not have any scope for extension of agriculture in their village They demanded that the waste lands, which were included in reserve forests should be given to them for extension of cultivation and housing sites [57] In another petition the *ryots* of Tenali taluk in Guntur district requested the District Collector that the lands which were included in reserved forest should be given to them for house building and agriculture extension [58] Thus, there was a pressing demand for the waste and forest lands included in the reserved forests in the plain areas

All the petitions by peasants in the plains articulated their opposition to the forest management system initiated by the Madras Forest Act of 1882 Under this Act most of the

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[56] Petition put forward by the *ryots* from the Kistna District BORP L/R Mis 19th February1907 F No 136
[57] Petition from the *ryots* of South Arcot District BORP L/R Mis 10th October 1904 F No 899
[58] Memorial from the *ryots* of Guntur District BORP L/R Mis 7 June 1905 F No 582

forests in Madras were reserved as state property and imposed restrictions on peoples' access to forests. Thus, the petitions and memorials from the plain peasants demonstrated the crisis originated due to the implementation of reservation of forests in the Madras Presidency. These petitions also show the underlying public discontentment on forest rules and regulations. This discontentment had on occasions manifested in the form of violating forest laws in all over the Madras Presidency. As a whole, these petitions demonstrate the contestations of the plain peasants for acquiring access to reserved forests through loyal means or change in policy. The high educational level and political consciousness of the plain peasants was also the reason behind the expression of their discontent in the form of written complaints on the hardship caused by the forest policies in the Madras Presidency. Thus, the attempt by the Revenue department for acquiring more powers over forest administration on the one hand, and peoples' contestations for access to reserve forests on the other, restricted the Forest department in exercising its restrictive rules in the Madras Presidency.

NATIVE NEWSPAPERS AND FOREST GRIEVANCES

Another important agency that had reflected on the peoples' grievances related to access to forests was the contemporary newspaper reports. Several articles and reports were published by the native newspapers on the difficulties experienced by the people due to forest laws in the Madras Presidency. The native newspaper reports not only described the forest grievances, but also reflected the native peoples' critique of the forest policies that were implemented in the Madras Presidency.

The editor of the *Swedeshimitran* a Tamil newspaper reported that prior to the implementation of the Madras Forest Act of 1882, plenty of forest and waste lands were attached to the villages and people enjoyed the access to forest products without any restrictions and tax It was argued that after the reservation of forests availability of forest products for poor people has became a thing of past He suggested that the waste lands adjoining villages should be planted with trees and given to villagers who should be made responsible for the cost of planting and maintaining trees on those lands in return for their labour the villagers should enjoy free of tax or on payment of an easy tax on the produce of these forests They should be allowed to take timber from the forest and other products as well in such quantity as they require but a penalty should be imposed on those who wontedly destroy the forests [59]

The above mentioned narrative was one of several such editorials and write ups in the natives press on the nature of the village forests that should be created in the Madras Presidency They were in favour of allowing the people to manage neighbouring waste and forest lands to obtain forest products that were essential for day-to-day life While highlighting the forest grievances the native press consistently demanded for creation of the village forests for addressing the grievances generated by the forest laws The editor of *Swedeshimitran* argued that the Forest department instead of focussing on the forest conservation for protection of climate and irrigation sources concentrated on revenue generation He felt that in order to carry out this object the department imposed heavy tax on forest products in reserved forests as a result of which the poor *ryots* were put in hardship [60]

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[59] *The Swedeshimitran* (Tamil Daily) 26 February 1887 translated version of the Native Newspapers Reports Madras Presidency (hereafter as NNPR) 6th June 1885 p 20

[60] *The Swadeshimitran* in 1887 NNPR 26th February 1887 p 23

This narrative shows how the forest resources were commercialised and peoples' access was restricted in reserved forests in the Madras Presidency.

The main reason for the severity of forest rules as described by the *Hindujanasamskharini* a Tamil daily was that ' People in this country had never been accustomed to pay a tax on firewood, but they are now made to do so, that is precisely reason why many people hate the forest rules and the department '[61] Similar opinion was expressed by the editor of the *Swadeshimitran* who argued that ' For many generations people have been freely utilising the forest products for purpose of life, and to put sudden restriction upon the long continued practice by the adoption of stringent measures will but cause the people much distress. The officers of the Forest Department should therefore be kept under proper control and not allowed in their zeal for carrying out the measures stringently that would ignore the time immemorial rights enjoyed by the people '[62] Thus the native press argued that the imposition of restrictions on peoples' access to forests resulted in severe inconvenience to people, for they were unable to meet the necessary requirements like fire wood, grazing and other forest products.

The political organisations took cognisance of forest grievances and articulated their opposition to the forest policies that were implemented in the Bombay and Madras Presidencies. In 1885, a commission was appointed by the Congress Working Committee in the Bombay Presidency, to conduct an enquiry on forest grievances. The *Karala Patrika* informed that the Karala Mahajanasabha agreed to cooperate with the Madras Mahajana Sabha with respect to conducting an enquiry on forest grievances. These organisations

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[61] *The Hindujanasamshkarini* (Tamil Daily) NNPR 26th February 1887, p 25.
[62] *The Swadeshimitran*, in NNPR 16th April 1886, p 55.

proposed a meeting in 1886, for discussing the grievances [63] However the effective political involvement in the issues pertaining to forest policies took place mainly during the non cooperation movements (1920 22) which were part of the first Gandhian national liberation struggle in different districts of the Madras Presidency [64]

One of the main factors responsible for forest grievances was the corrupt practices indulged by the forest subordinate officials They demanded bribe from people for allowing them into the reserved forests for grazing and collection of minor other forest products Regarding this problem, the *Swadeshimitran* reported that forest rangers, guards and watchers were indulging in corruption in the form of taking bribes from people for allowing them to access the forest products in reserved forests The newspaper demanded that the government should regulate the malpractices of the Forest department s staff and minimise the grievances caused by forest rules [65]

On the corruption of the forest officials, the correspondent of the *Swadeshimitran* described that " the hardship caused by the forest officers to the people is unspeakable It would be better if government put the inhabitants of each village at the mouth of canon and reserve all the asked lands as reserve forests The tears shed by the people due to severity forest of rules and the cruelty of the forest officers will not go in vain they will turn out to be sharp swords to cut by the root of this government " [66] This type of militant statement though may be rare but would indicate the severity of the grievances experienced by the people due to the implementation of stringent forest regulations on access to neighbouring forests In

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[63] The *Kerala Patrika* in NNPR, September 7th 1885
[64] Atlury Murali *Civil Disobedience Movements in Andhra*
[65] The *Swadeshimitran* in NNPR 18th February 1888 p 43
[66] *Ibid*

another issue the editor of *The Swadeshimitran* reported that the forest officials frequently arrested the innocent people and did not leave them until they paid bribes He demanded the government to conduct an enquiry on the working of the Madras Forest Act of 1882 and make necessary amendments to minimise the hardship and inconvenience to the *ryots*.[67]

By the 1890s the Forest department became so unpopular that the newspaper the *Calanandi* reported that ' The expenditure of department should be reduced by removing the District Forest Officers and entrusting their duties to the Assistant Collectors and by making over changes of the duties of the forest subordinates to revenue officers wherever possible" [68] The popular perception of the cruelty of forest officials therefore hated by people in contrast to the positive image of the Revenue department s officials is an interesting aspect that needs to be explored so that the making of public perception and consciousness could be analysed in detail One reason for this perhaps was that people perceived the forest guards and watchers as their immediate enemies and hated the entire Forest department

The expansion of the Forest department s power and its intervention in day to-day life of people resulted in severe public discontent on forest policies While pointing out the reason for public discontent on forest policies the correspondent of the *Swadeshimitran* observed that The Forest Department already imposed tax on all forest necessaries and now they are trying to impose rules on stones and fuller s earth They will hereafter levy duty even on other kinds of earth, the result will be that poor people will find it extremely hard to build their miserable huts [69]

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[67] *Swadeshimitran* in NNPR 12[th] October 1889 p 232
[68] *Calanandi* (Tamil Weekly) in NNPR 11[th] May 1889 p 232
[69] *The Swadeshimitran* in NNPR 14[th] July 1891 p 196

Thus the native newspapers not only highlighted the forest crisis but also demanded the Madras Government to relax the severity of forest rules However, the native press mainly represented the grievances of plain peasants and there were very few references to the grievances of tribals Nevertheless, the native press acted as an effective mediating agency in representing forest grievances They voiced the public opinion on forest grievances and forced the government to accommodate the interests of the plain peasants in its policy framework

FOREST POLICY IMPLICATION ON CATTLE GRAZING

The forest reservation process undertaken by the Madras Government in the plain areas imposed restrictions on cattle grazing and resulted in severe inconvenience to plain peasants In 1890 the Madras Government undertook the policy of converting the reserved lands category where people were allowed some concessions for grazing into closed reserved forests category This process resulted in the imposition of strict regulations on grazing access even in the plain areas Thus the transformation of grazing lands from open access resources to state regulated domains generated crisis in the plain peasants life The public discontent on grazing policy was represented to the government in the form of petitions reports in newspapers violation of grazing rules and killings of the forest subordinate officials in the Madras Presidency

The main reason for the problems related to cattle grazing in the Madras was on many occasions, reserved forests boundaries were created nearby village habitations and agriculture fields As a result of it cattle trespass into reserved forests and imposition of fines on cattle owners became a regular feature For instance, *ryots* from South Arcot district

while complaining to the District Collector on the severity of grazing rules, informed that due to the proximity of reserved forest boundary in their village, in spite of careful vigilance cattle entered into reserved forests and immediately impounded by the forest subordinates [70]

According to the editor of the *Swadeshimitran* the main reason for the problems pertaining to the access to grazing in the Madras Presidency was that most of the pasture lands freely accessed earlier by the *ryots* were brought under the state reservation He argued that while forest settlement was conducted sufficient grazing lands were not allocated for peasants as source for grazing The problem pertaining to access to grazing was aggravated by the corrupt practices indulged by the forest watchers, who demanded bribe from poor *ryots* [71]

The *Hindoojanabhoosham* a newspaper from Madras argued that cattle which were an important source for agriculture, declined due to the restrictions and heavy fee that were imposed on grazing in reserved forests It criticised the contract system introduced for managing grazing in reserved forests [72] The *Andhra Patrika* a Telugu daily reported that impositions of the heavy grazing fee on goat and sheep resulted in problems for people in procuring manure The newspaper pointed out that the stringent forest rules implemented by the Madras Government were more sever than the rules by the Muslim rulers [73] The burden of tax and the forest regulations imposed on people were the two important issues that were critiqued by the contemporary press in the Madras Presidency

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Memorial from the *ryots* of South Arcot District BORP L R 30 June 1897 I No 631
The *Swadesimitran* in NNPR 9th April 1887 p 55
Hindoojanabhoosham (Tamil Daily) in NNPR 7 May 1887 p 25
Andhra Patrika in NNPR, 6 December 1886

In response to peoples plea on grazing issue, the Madras Government introduced some measures for the management of grazing in 1890. The rules for grazing management were formulated for each district depending on the local conditions. Under these rules, cattle were categorised into agricultural and non-agriculture cattle. The agriculture cattle were permitted to graze in reserved forests at rates of reduced grazing fee. For instance, under this scheme, grazing permits were charged at half rates on 3 heads of cattle for every five acres of the *patta* lands owned by *ryots* in Coimbatore district [74]. However, discretion was given to the District Collectors and the District Forest Officers to formulate the rules for grazing management according to local conditions [75].

In spite of these measures, grazing problems continued to persist in the Madras Presidency. The petition from the *ryots* of Daneapalli village in Kistna district illustrates this problem. They complained that, as per the village settlement, the total area of the village was 8,270 acres, of which 6,802 acres were under cultivation and 508 acres were left as *poromboke* lands, i.e., as village common land for grazing. The remaining 960 acres were left under the *Dharmakhandams* (Local grazing grounds). They complained that the extension of reservation sanctioned by the government included 800 acres of land in the reserve forest and left only 197 acres for grazing which was inadequate for their requirements. They requested the government to exclude the land which was included in the reserved forests [76]. This petition shows the traditional functional system that managed the forests and waste lands in the Andhra region, which the peasants are demanding to be left untouched. In the Kistna and Godavari districts, the waste lands acquired significant demand due to

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[4] *Report of the Madras Forest Committee*, Vol. I, Government Press, Madras, 1913, p. 5.
BORP, L/R, 30th August 1892, F. No. 896.
Petition from the *Ryots* of Kistna District, BORP, L/R, Mis. 4th May 1894, F. No. 599.

improvement in the irrigation facilities At the same time, agricultural expansion generated demand for cattle that required grazing in forests Due to reservation of forests and restrictions on access to grazing grounds the maintenance of cattle became a severe problem for peasants in the Madras Presidency

The *Swadeshimitran* criticising the Madras Government s policy on forest reservation argued that prior to implementation of the Madras Forest Act of 1882 *ryots* had exercised the customary rights in collection of wood for ploughs and other agricultural implements fire wood and dry leaves for manuring fields and grazing The editor of the newspaper felt that after promulgation of the Madras Forest Act of 1882 the government had indiscriminately reserved the forests in plain areas and imposed regulations on peoples access The newspaper expressed its apprehension that in the absence of grazing sources sheep goats and other cattle wealth may decline which in turn would leads to decline in agricultural productivity in the Madras Presidency [77]

The *Taraka* a daily from Bangalore, argued that enforcement of regulations on the peoples customary access to forests deprived the people of their short-term and long term needs in the Madras Presidency It suggested the Madras Government to undertake a systematic census on the cattle in each village and allocate sufficient grazing grounds in the adjourning reserved forests [78] Thus, the newspapers were vocal in their criticism of the government forest reservation policy and articulated popular demand for creation of village forests that would allow people in accessing forest products

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[77] *The Swadshimitran* in NNPR September 26th 1890 pp 205 206
[78] *Taraka* (Daily from Bangalore) in NNPR 5 June 1901 p 228

As if adding fuel to the fire whenever famine or drought occurred, the stringent forest rules added more burden on people The *Swadeshimitran s* correspondent reported that the restrictions on access to forests created troubles to people in the dry districts like North Arcot Salem Cuddpah and Chelgulput He informed that thousands of cattle died due to lack of grazing sources in these districts The correspondent felt that almost every inch of land available for pasturage was reserved and brought under strict regulation and subjected to grazing fee He demanded the government to relax the severity of forest regulations and undertake the measures to improve pasturage [79]

In spite of stiff public resistance to forest rules the Madras Government undertook an extensive reservation of forests in the plain areas and imposed fee on grazing lands While commenting on the nature of permission for grazing in reserved forests the Conservator of Forests commented that " It must be clearly understood that the permission to graze is a privilege and not a right claimable by any one unless such has been admitted at settlement which of I am glade to say has not yet been the case in any division that the arrangements are left entirely to district forest officer subject to the collector s approval [80]

The above statement shows the ruthless nature of forest settlement carried out by the Madras Government It is a noticeable fact that in the entire Northern Circle there was no single instance of admitting any claim of people for accessing grazing grounds as a right by the Forest Settlement Officers The peoples customary access to grazing grounds was restricted after the creation of reserved forests Thus grazing was strictly regulated by

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[79] *The Swadshimitran* in NNPR, 27th October 1891 p 317

[80] Letter from the Conservator of the Forests North Circle BORP L/R Mis 16th December 1890 F No 707 pp 3 4

imposing a heavy grazing tax on all categories of cattle in reserved forests This resulted in severe inconvenience to *ryots* and created public discontent against forest rules

However in spite of open criticism in the press and vehement public resistance restrictions were imposed on grazing in reserved forests The main reason for imposing restrictions on razing was to generate revenue from the grazing permits in reserved forests Grazing in the reserved forests was regulated with the fee imposed on permits for cattle to be grazed in a particular season [81] In 1890 the Madras Government abandoned the scheme of creating village forests and undertook extensive reservation of forests in the plain areas as well [82] The reason for adopting this policy appears to be that the Madras Government recognised the potential of revenue generation from taxing grazing in reserved forests As result of it, most of the accessible forests were reserved and brought under the supervision of the Forest department

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[81] Draft rules for the management of Village Forest in Cuddapah District BORP L/R Mis 16[3] December 1890 Γ No 707 pp 9 8

[82] J A Voelcker *Report on the Improvement of Indian Agriculture* Agri-Coal reprints (first published in 1893 by Government Press Calcutta) Delhi 1986 p 162

Revenue on Grazing fees from Reserve Forests in Madras Presidency

Year	Revenue from Grazing (In rupees)
1886 87	81 203
1887 88	1 05811
1888-89	1,29,855
1889-90	1 43,845
1890-91	92 621
1891 92	1,15 794
1892-93	1 75 589
1893-94	2 66 891
1894 95	3 28 293
1895 96	3,40 496
1896 97	3,76 354
1897-98	3,63 905
1898 99	3,76 354
1899-00	4 89 765
1900 01	5 10 451
1901-02	5 40,068
1902-03	5 78 500
1903-04	6,07 400
1904-05	6 27 474
1905 06	6,62 837
1906 07	6,78,537
1907 08	7,27,343
1908-09	7,82,510
1909-00	7,69,770
1910-11	6 31 643

Source Compiled from Annual Administrative reports of the Forest Department in the Madras Presidency for relevant years

The above table shows the steady increase in the revenue from grazing especially after 1892-93 the grazing revenue gradually increased mainly due to the policy adopted by the government after 1890 Under this policy most of the waste and common lands were converted into reserved forests and subjected to grazing tax The steady increase of revenue from the grazing tax in reserve forests testifies the commercialisation of forest resources in the Madras Presidency

One of the most vexed problems due to forest reservation was proximity of the reserved forest boundary to the village habitation and cultivated fields Because of this cattle frequently trespassed into reserved forests and imposition of penalties on cattle owners became a recurrent problem While describing this problem the *Janakulan* a weekly from Madras informed that " As soon as the cattle are unyoked from the plough they graze in the reserve forests in spite of the vigilance of the owners as a result of that heavy fines are collected from poor man indiscriminately [83] The *Swadeshimitran* in one of its issues referred the Government of India's order on the proximity of reserved forest boundary to villages As per this order, the government should not reserve any forest tract that was less than five square miles in extent [84] The newspaper requested the Madras Government to exclude the waste and forest lands that were close to village habitation sites from the preview of forest reservation scheme

The Madras Government recognised the magnitude of this problem and took some steps to mitigate it In 1895, the District Collectors were instructed to abandon the forest area under reservation that was less than 3,000 acres in extent [85] Subsequently this limit was increased to 5 square miles [86] However, numerous cases came to the notice of the Madras Forest Committee of 1912 that was appointed to enquire into forest grievances where reserved forest boundary was marked closely to the village habitation site and cultivated fields People represented many cases to the Committee where they were compelled to dispose of their cattle sheep and goats due to the restrictions on accessing grazing lands The

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[83] *Janakulan* in NNPR, 13th April 1895 p 132
[84] *The Swadeshimitran* in NNPR, 4th October 1895 pp 299 300
[85] AARFD 1896-97 p 11
[86] The Forest Policy of Madras Presidency *The Indian Forester* vol XXIII 1897 p 388

severity of this was such that the public expressed their anger against the forest rules by killing forest guards and watchers in some parts of the Madras Presidency [87]

Thus access to grazing lands became severe problem in the Madras Presidency Implementation of the Madras Forest Act of 1882 and imposition of regulations on the customary peoples' access to forests created problems in plain areas However due to better literacy and political consciousness the middle and rich peasants in the plains contested the rules through the mediation of the press and petitions to acquire access to reserved forests At the same time, the forest rules, which had restricted the very means of livelihood for the poor were frequently violated The following table shows the magnitude of cattle trespassing into reserved forests

Numbers of Cattle Impounded for Illegal Entry in Reserved Forests

Year	No Cattle during the year
1898 99	2 82,877
1899 00	2 72 304
1900 01	2 21 372
1901 02	1 75 129
1902 03	3 70 388
1903-04	2 92 196
1904-05	2 92 196
1905 06	2 30 234
1908 09	2 13 802
1909 10	2 12861
1910 11	2 02 093
1911 12	2 00 161
1912 13	1 96 408
1913-14	1 90 652
1914 15	2 08 393
1915 16	1 75 903
1917 18	1 18 806
1918 19	1 47 385
1919-20	1 44 849

Source: Compiled from The Annual Administrative Reports of the Forest Department in Madras Presidency 1898-1920 Details are not available for the years 1906 80 and 1916-17

[8] *The Madras Forest Committee* Vol II Government Press Madras 1913 p 7

After 1890s the Government of Madras abandoned the scheme of village forests and undertook the extensive reservation of minor or degraded forests and village commons for generating revenue to state. Thus the village commons managed by local village communities were incorporated in reserved forests wherein strict regulations were imposed on peoples' access to grazing sources. Poor peasants and pastoralists who do not have own lands and alternative grazing sources resorted to violation of grazing rules. In the initial years of forest reservation, large numbers of cattle were impounded and fines and penalties were charged on the owners. It also shows the gravity of grazing problem, for in spite of strict restrictions and policing the people continued to violate the forest rules. But after 1915 one would notice a gradual decline in the number of cattle impounded and put in pond. This trend has happened mainly because under the recommendations of the Madras Forest Committee of 1912, the Madras Government initiated the forest *panchayats* scheme wherein grazing access to *ryots* was allowed in at reduced rates of taxation in reserved forests.

The problems related to access to grazing in reserved forests mainly affected the poor *ryots* who did not have their own lands for grazing. Generally the rich *ryots* had two sources for grazing: one they have sufficient own lands where they grazed their cattle and two they paid government tax or bribe to the forest subordinate officials and grazed their cattle in the reserved forests. But, the poor *ryots* and shepherds who were unable to pay either tax to government or bribe to the forest subordinate officials, were subjected to severe suffering. For instance, some of the *ryots* from Nellore district complained to the Madras Forest Committee of 1912 that whenever cattle go near to reserve forest boundary, they were

immediately impounded by the forest subordinate officials who collected heavy fines from cattle owners [88]

Regarding the interference of forest rules in day to day life of peasants, a *ryot* named Patttabhi Ramireddi complained that From the time of Adam and Eve we have been using the forests I don not know why the Forest Department should come in and fix a fee [89] Grazing problem severely affected the poor *ryots* for instance Veerabhadra Reddi a *ryot* from Nellore district informed the Madras Forest Committee of 1912 that Petty *ryots* do not own any land and private pasture lands there was no room for their cattle to graze and as even if one animal grazed the whole lot of them is drove to the pound they are obliged to take permits for the whole lot whether there is pasture or not [90] Due to heavy tax on grazing the poor *ryots* were forced to sell their cattle For instance, the *ryots* from Duttalaor village of Nellore district, informed the Madras Forest Committee of 1912 that Before the reservation of forests we were having many cattle wealth, but for want of money to pay for permits we had to sell our cattle owing to the tax burden fell upon us due to reservation [91] Thus the reservation of accessible forests and imposition of tax on grazing created problems to peasants in plain areas

The poor *ryots* constantly demanded for either complete abolition or reduction of tax on grazing in reserved forests For instance, a *ryot* from Mangalagiri taluk of Guntur district informed the Madras Forest Committee of 1912 that due to reservation of neighbouring hills he could not feed his cattle He complained that 8 annas of grazing fee imposed on each

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[88] *Ibid* p 13
[89] *Ibid* p 33
[90] *Ibid* p 80
[91] *Ibid* p 125

buffalo in reserved forest was heavy and he could not afford to pay [92] This situation had severe implications on the plain peasants' agrarian economy In plain areas most of the *ryots* keep large number of cattle for various agricultural activities After reservation of forests most of the waste lands were notified as government forests and *ryots* were compelled to pay money for grazing in reserved forests However both for the rich and poor peasants there was another dimension to the grazing problem in the Andhra region In the words of the Vice-President of the Taluk Board of Narsaopet that " In most cases reserves are close to the village, grazing grounds are set apart far away from these places The *ryots* will have to go through the reserves for grazing ground and there is no proper protection to reserve forests naturally the cattle stray into reserves and are immediately impounded by the forest subordinates " [93] This situation resulted in the hostile relations between the people and the forest subordinates People have shown their discontent by violating grazing rules in reserve forests In some instances, people even indulged in killing forest the subordinates For instance in Pullareddygodem of Guntur district the people killed four forest watchers [94]

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[92] *Ibid* p 183
[93] *Ibid* p 256
[94] *Ibid* p 176

Cases Reported on Illegal Grazing in Reserved Forests

Year	Number of causes reported during the year
1902 03	9 158
1903 04	7 656
1904 05	6 496
1905 06	7 712
1906 07	7 958
1907-08	7 914
1908 09	8 874
1909 10	8 497
1910 11	8 405
1911-12	*
1912 13	8 591
1913 14	*
1914-15	9 495
1915-16	8 191
1916 17	7 166
1917-18	6 589
1918-19	7 169
1919 20	7 511
1920 21	6 869

Source Compiled from the Annual Administrative Reports of the Forest Department in the Madras Presidency for relevant years * Details are not available

The above table shows the number of illegal entries for grazing that were booked as cases in the Madras Presidency By 1900s most of forest and waste lands were constituted as reserved forests and subjected to rigid restrictions on peoples' access From 1902-03 to 1914-1915 there was consistent increase of illegal entries of grazing in reserved forests Knowing the gravity of situation the Madras Government appointed the Madras Forest Committee This committee recommended the creation of the forests *panchayat* comprising of local cattle owners for management of grazing sources After 1916 the illegal entries for grazing source in reserved forests begun to decline due to the fact that the forest *pachayats* treated the peoples' access to grazing liberally and did not enforce the rigid grazing rules In

1920-21, there was further decline in illegal grazing causes because of the fact that the violation of forest rules so widely done by the people that lower forest staff could not dare to book causes of illegal entries for grazing in reserved forests Though on most occasions grazing violations were not booked as cases one would see the large number of cases recorded in the annual administrative reports of Forest department It shows the intensity of forest grievances and peoples resistance on forest rules

FOREST POLICY IMPLECATION ON SHEEP AND GOAT GRAZING

One of the important reasons for unpopularity of the Forest department in the Madras Presidency was the imposition of regulations on sheep and goat grazing Traditionally the peasants and pastoralists kept sheep and goats not only as a source for livelihood but also for manuring agricultural fields Thus raring of goats and sheep was an important activity not only for pastoralists but also to the plain peasant economy After reservation of the forests the goat and sheep grazing was strictly prohibited in reserved forests This situation resulted in severe crisis to the pastoralists and peasants alike

The memorial put forward by some of the *ryots* from Coimbatore district complained that forest watchers and guards did not allow their goats even into unreserved forests They informed that due to reservation of neighbouring forests they were compelled to dispose off goats and sheep [95] The Forest department officials on the other hand strictly discouraged goat grazing because they believed that it would adversely affect the forest growth Most of

[95] Memorial from the *ryots* of Coimbatore District BORP L/R Mis 20 February 1891 F No 157

the forest officials therefore argued that permission to goats would destroys the reserved forests [96]

The forest officials in the Northern Circle argued that the goats were detrimental for forest conservation and proposed for their complete exclusion from reserve forests The Conservator of the Forests in the Southern Circle quoted the popular Tamil proverb in support of his argument that 'Goats spoil a jungle just as a wandering king a country' He also argued that '... it would be impossible to secure reproduction either natural or artificial if goats were admitted into reserve forests We can testify the havoc done by goats in all these southern circle's districts and to the very marked importance noticeable after the short period of their exclusion' [97] Thus the forest officials strictly discouraged the goat browsing in reserved forests Consequently the poor *ryots* who kept goats for manuring and supplement to their agriculture income were put to hardships

However, the Madras Government come up with some measures to manage goat browsing District Collectors were instructed to fix the number of sheep and goats to be grazed in reserved forest The reason for this sympathetic shift in the policy appear to be the result of adverse affect that forest policy had on the animal wealth in the Presidency The number of sheep and goat population for instance declined from 14 054 492 in 1887-88 to 13 108 706 in 1907 [98]

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[96] BORP L/R Mis 13th September 1889 F No 863 p 20 This file consisted of correspondence among the forest officials of various provinces on the sheep and goat browsing

[97] *Ibid* p 20

[98] BORP L/R Mis 16th August 1907 F No 164 pp ? 3 This file has officials correspondence pertaining to goat browsing in Nellore district

The main reason for the decline in goat population was the increase in the license fee from one anna to four annas per head on each goat and sheep [99] Thus, not only the pastoral life but also the peasants who depended on the goats for manuring fields had suffered a lot due to restrictions implemented by the forest reservation in the Madras Presidency An important aspect of the decline in sheep and goat population is the uneven nature of the impact as is shown in the table below

Status of Goat and Sheep Population in Nellore District

Taluks	Sheep		Goats	
	1896 97	1897 98	1896 97	1897-98
Kanigiri	42 033	39 881	27 233	15 459
Kandukur	61 394	60 577	16 791	17 128
Kavali	31 842	27 796	15 564	18 598
Nellore	21 073	22 229	16 805	19 742
Gudur	31 466	23 333	14 617	22 060
Rapur	60 790	55 723	29 220	34 878
Atmakur	30 537	63,434	75 865	29 635
Udyagiri	48,122	39,431	25,353	23,488
Total	3 27 257	3,32 408	2 21 448	1 80 988

Source Board of Revenue (I and Revenue) Forest No 161, 16th August 1907 p 17

The above table shows the decline in the goat population in several taluks of Nellore district A member of the Board of Revenue visited the Nellore district to observe the problems pertaining to goat browsing He noted that goat population had declined significantly due to lack of proper grazing facilities [100]

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[99] *Ibid* p 18
[100] *Ibid*, p 28

Thus, the forest policies have severe implications on peoples' livelihood in many ways especially as the grazing that has become a terrible problem for peasants in the Madras Presidency. From 1885 on wards, one would notice a consistent increase in the crime related to violation of forest rules in reserved forests in the Presidency.

Cases Reported in Madras Presidency on Forest Crime

Year	Number of Cases
1885-86	2 269
1886-87	2 443
1887-88	3 358
1888-89	3 377
1889-90	3 088
1890-91	5 577
1891-92	8 124
1892-93	10 905
1893-94	10 007
1894-95	9 883
1895-96	9 610
1896-97	11 638
1877-98	14 993
1898-99	18 295
1899-00	20 450
1900-01	22 130
1901-02	23 750
1902-03	23 125
1903-04	21 883
1904-05	21 930
1905-06	23 021
1906-07	23 141
1907-08	24 453
1908-09	25 470
1909-10	25 277
1910-11	26 489
1911-12	28 995
1912-13	29 892
1913-14	31 177
1914-15	32 541
1915-16	30 885
1916-17	28 087
1917-18	27 091
1918-19	26 160
1919-20	27 537

Sources: Compiled from the Annual Administrative Reports of Forest Department in the Madras Presidency for relevant years

The above table shows the steady increase in the number of cases that were reported on forest crime. The forest crime rate kept up due to the fact that after the 1890s, most of the waste and forest lands were brought under the reserved forest category and the forest products and grazing were subjected to heavy tax. This reservation of forests imposed restrictions on peoples' access to forests. In response to restrictions on the access to forests, people resisted and therefore the violation of the forest rules in reserved forests has became an acute problem to the state. The consistent increase in the crimes related to the violation of rules in reserved forest attest to the widespread public discontent on the forest policies in the Madras Presidency. The increase in forest crimes also shows that in spite of rigid rules and systematic bureaucratic vigilance, forest laws were violated by people in the Presidency because, the colonial system treated peoples' misfortune as crime. The dependency of people on forests was so critical that the people not only violated the forest rules but also damaged the reserved forests by putting fires. The government reservation of forests for state monopolistic exploitation had also created distinction between private and public property. The forests were perceived by the people as state property and tried to damage them as an expression of their discontent. For instance, 60 cases in 1892 and 111 cases in 1893 were booked against the persons, who damaged the reserved forests by burning [1]. This situation compelled the colonial state to search for a mechanism that would adequately address the contestations of people for accessing reserved forests.

IDEAS AND DEBATES ON FOREST PANCHAYATS

There was no direct provision for on the creation of village forests in the Madras Forest Act of 1882. But the section 26 of the Act empowered District the Collectors to set apart a tract

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[1] AARFD 1893-92, p. 21

of forest land to meet the requirements of people from forests Since the creation of village forests was not sanctioned by law they were rarely created by the forest settlement officers at the time of reservation of forests As a result of it there were no sources left for people to meet their requirements of firewood minor forest products and cattle grazing

Some of the petitions by the peasants in plain areas demanded for the creation of village forests as a remedy for the grievances related to accessing forests For instance a petition from the *ryots* of Coimbatore district complained that for generations they were accustomed to use neighbouring forests for grazing fire wood, leaves for manure and wood for agricultural implements They informed that their access to neighbouring forests was restricted after reservation of forests They requested the Collector to set apart a forest area to obtain the forest products that was essential for agricultural activities [107]

Some of the native newspapers demanded the Madras Government to create village forests in the Presidency The editor of the *Swadeshimitran* felt that prior to the implementation of the Madras Forest Act of 1882, villagers had free access to *porombokes* and forest lands in their villages He argued that the implementation of the Act resulted in appropriation of most of the forests and waste lands under reservation He demanded for creation of village forests for each village to provide forest products for people [108]

The Tamil daily *Dashabhimani* suggested that government should conduct an enquiry on the extent of waste and forest lands and create village forests for allowing people to obtain forest products It expressed the hope that the Madras Government would create

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[107] Petition from *ryots* of Coimbatore District in BOPR L/R Mis 28[th] April 1891 T No 369

[108] *The Swadeshimitra* in NNPR 16[th] April 1887 p 55

village forests in every village to be used as common grazing grounds by villagers [104] In another issue the editor of *Dashabhimani* proposed an interesting suggestion that each village should be allotted a separate forest tract for requirements of villagers [105] However the creation of village forests for each village proved to be impractical in the Madras Presidency As a result, the village forest scheme was abandoned in 1890 Yet the demand for the creation of village forests was continued to be echoed in the Madras Presidency by the people the native newspapers and some of the government officials The resistance of the people against the forest laws generated a debate on the changes that were to be brought into the nature of forest polices in the Madras Presidency so that the policy could adequately address the public discontent on forest rules

Thus there was a consistent demand from plain peasants and the native newspapers for the creation of village forests In order to find out a solution for this problem the Madras Government appointed a committee, came to be known as the Madras Forest Committee of 1912 to enquiry into the grievances related to peoples' access to forests The Committee suggested to reorganise the forest administration and proposed the following categories of forests for an effective management in the Madras Presidency

1) Reserve forests important for climatic purpose
2) Reserve forests meant for valuable timber
3) Reserve forests for fuel plantations
4) Reserve forests for grazing and minor forest products
5) Reserve forests exclusively for grazing
6) Reserves forests those are completely denuded

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[104] *Deshabhimani* from Cuddapah District September 14[th] May 1892 in NNPR p 220
[105] *Dashabhimani* in NNPR 6[th] June 1885 p 20

The Madras Forest Committee recommended that the first, second and third of above mentioned categories should be managed by the Forest department while the fourth fifth and sixth categories should be handed over to the local *panchayats* for management under the supervision of the Revenue department.[106] The Committee suggested that to mitigate the forest grievances in the plains, the minor and degraded forests and their management should be handed over to the *panchayats* to be managed by the local people

Mr Ramachandra Rao the Sub Collector of Nellore District suggested that village forests can effectively be managed by village *panchayats* comprising of local people than the Forest department He also felt that the creation of the forest *panchayat* system for management of village forests reduce the forest grievances of people [107] He advocated that the executive committee for the management of the forest *panchayats* should be elected by the entire village by voting Thus, he recommended for involvement of local communities in forest management These ideas were also echoed in the vision of the native intelligentsia on the forest *panchayats* system

The native intelligentsia openly supported the idea of the forest *panchayats* for the management of village forests The Madras Forest Committee of 1912 interviewed a pleader cum *ryot* from Tenali taluk of Guntur district whose conservation is reproduce below

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[106] *The Madras Forest Committee* Vol I pp 14-16
[107] *The Madras Forest Committee* Vol II p 52

President who is to say as to how many cattle are to be admitted into panachyats?
Ryot The panchayats
President What criteria should they be guided in settling the number
Ryot Generally the agricultural cattle should be given preference
President But agricultural cattle generally belong to rich *ryots* and well to do people
Ryot Agricultural cattle belonging to poor people should be selected first
President Do you think the panchayats will do that
Ryot I think so
President will the representatives of panchayats comprised of big *ryots* of the village?
Ryot If it is given to the panchayats they will see to it but if it is given to individuals, they may not show interest
President Of whom should the panchayats consist of?
Ryot I think the members should be elected
President By whom should they be elected?
Ryot By the villagers
President By all *ryots*
Ryot The assessment of tax paid by each *ryot* may be taken to determine the voter [108]

This conversation reflects the nature of forest *panchayats* that were envisaged by the native intelligentsia Many *ryots* were of the opinion that the forest *panchayats* should address the grievances of the poor peasants and the governing body of the *panchayats* should be elected by the entire population in the villages

But some of the officials expressed apprehension regarding the constitution of village forest *panchayats* The Deputy Collector of Guntur District pointed out that there were many factions in most of villages in Guntur district [0] However Kasava Palli one of the members in the Madras Forest Committee of 1912 stood strongly in favour of the agriculturists interests and persuaded the Madras Government to devolve the responsibility of the forest

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[8] *Ibid* p 189
Ibid p 194

management to local communities [110] Some of the political associations like the Guntur District Association, adopted a resolution on forest grievances and demanded for the creation of forest *panchayats* [111]

The articulation by the public for the creation of village forests was endorsed by the Madras Forest Committee of 1912 It recommended for the creation of the forest *panchayats* for mitigating the grievances experienced by people due to the stringent forest rules [112] Thus by 1910s a favourable discourse on the communal management of forests in plain areas came into existence It was also reflected in the recommendations made by the Madras Forest Committee of 1912, for the creation of the forest *panchayats* The underlying reason for this shift in policy was the prolonged public contestation coupled with the Madras Government's intention to reduce the duties of the Forest department so that they would be allow to concentrate on the silvicultural operations for generating more revenue

The intervention of government in the management of grazing and minor forests in the plain areas proved to be a failure in the Madras Presidency The colonial state's bureaucratic system could not control the clandestine use of forest products by people The point to be mentioned here is that the peoples' livelihood dependency on forests was so critical that the state could not control the illegal access to forests However, inability of the Forest department in controlling the illegal access to forests made the Madras Government to look for local the traditional grazing management practices as an alternative The Madras Forest Committee of 1912 was also felt that the grazing was effectively managed by the traditional grazing management practices, like the *Kancha* in Nellore, the *Dharmakhandmas*

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[110] *Ibid* p 226
[111] *Ibid* p 231
[112] *Forest Committee* Vol I p 16

in Kistna and Guntur districts Under these systems waste lands were given to a group of *ryots* for the management of grazing on a fixed assessment The Committee suggested that involvement of local people by creating usufruct rights as the remedy for the forest grievances [113] In was in this context that the Madras Forest Committee of 1912 suggested for the creation of the forest *panchayats* The recommendations of the committee were as follows

DUTIES OF THE PANCHAYATS

1) Main functions of the panchayats were to regulate the number of cattle to be grazed prohibition of goats and management of grazing rotation

2) The panchayats should be held the responsible to prevent the denudation of the grazing grounds and specially for collecting the grazing revenue

3) The panchayats will be responsible for the clearing and maintenance of the boundary lines of blocks and for the carrying out of order communicated to them from time to time

POWERS OF THE PANCHAYATS

1) The powers to admit or exclude any cattle of their own village from the grazing grounds or where limitations ordered to decide what cattle are to be admitted This will include the powers to exclude the cattle of any person who is found cutting or doing other harm to the forest without permission or who fails to pay his share of the revenue or who refuses to obey the legitimate orders of the Panchayats

2) The powers to impound cattle which graze without permission

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[113] *Ibid* p 18

3) Powers to regulate these of fuel so far as it is available for domestic or agricultural purpose [114]

CONTROL OF THE PANCHYATS

The Madras Forest Committee of 1912 proposed that the general administrative control of the forest *panachyats* should be given to the divisional officers However the committee suggested that the government should interfere as little as possible in the management of the forest *panachyats* It was recommended that so long as the results of their management were satisfactory, the *panchayats* should be left free to organise the management of forests given to them [115]

The *Hindu* newspaper appreciated the recommendations suggested by the Madras Forest Committee of 1912 on the creation of forest *panchayats* It requested the Madras Government to implement the Committee s recommendations by creating the forest *panchayats* [116] The *Madras Standard*, a daily newspaper appreciated the Madras Forest Committee of 1912 for the suggestions it had made on the creation of forest *panchayats* It greeted Kasav Pali and Ramachandra Rao, who were the members of the Madras Forest Committee of 1912 for their persuasion on the creation of the forest *panchyats* to address the native peoples' grievances related to access to forests [117] The *Andhra* a weakly from Guntur district demanded the Madras Government to implement the recommendations suggested by the Committee to mitigate the hardship of villagers in accessing the forests in the Madras Presidency [118]

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[114] *Ibid* p 22
[115] *Ibid*
[116] *The Hindu* in NNPR February 26[th] 1913
[117] *The Madras Standard* in NNPR March 14[th] 1913 p 7
[118] *Andhra* Gunter in NNPR March 14[th] 1913 p 7

The recommendations of the Madras Forest Committee of 1912 were accepted by the Madras Government and initiated measures for the creation of the forest *panchayats* to be managed by the local people In the year 1918 the forest *panchayats* were created in Chittore Anantapur, Chingletput Bellary and Guntur districts.[119] For the supervision of forest *panchayats* a separate executive establishment was created in 1922 by transferring 966 square miles of reserved forests under its supervision While mentioning the success of the forest *panchayats* the District Forest Officer from Vellore taluk of South Arcot District wrote that 'The old order of things are changing, five years ago the Forest Officer in this part was approached by the *ryots* only with a grievances or a complaint against subordinates Today I was met a mile out of Tanipadi by practically the whole village with tom tom and music I was made to discount from by ghee and to head the procession till the rest-house was reached Herein had to submit to the ordinal or being garlanded by the local pachayatdras and then listened to an oration in Tamil by one of the *panchyatdars* eulogising the Forest Department '[120] Thus the forest *panchayat* system was very much glorified by the Forest officials

In 1923, the Retrenchment Committee which had dealt with the re-organisation of the Forest department recommended a general reclassification of the reserved forests Accordingly minor, fuel and grazing reserves which were useful to people in meeting every day needs termed as 'Ryot forests' were formed and kept under the management of the forest *panchayats* managed by local people[121] In 1925 around 1 226 square miles of reserved forests was transferred for the management by 587 forest *panchayats* in some of the

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[119] AARFD 1918 19 p 69
[120] AARFD 1923 24 p 8
[121] G T Boag *The Madras Presidency 1881 1931* Government Press Madras 1933 p 61

districts in the Madras Presidency [172] Another important development that took place in 1927 was that out of the 18,954 square miles of the total reserved forest the extent of 3,389 square miles of reserve forest land was handed over for the management of the Revenue department under the name of Ryot Forests For their management 1,130 forest *panchayats* were created and kept under the supervision of the Revenue department [173]

The general composition of forest *panchayat* was a committee consisting of 5 to 9 members elected among themselves by the general body of cattle owners in the village The elected members of the committee would then elect one as a president from among them The main duties of the forest *panchayats* were to issue grazing permits and collect fee on grazing and minor forest produce The forest *panchayats* were expected to protect the reserved forests from illegal grazing and felling and goat-browsing and fire.[174]

However two factors were mainly responsible for the creation of the forest *panchayats* in the Madras Presidency first militant movements that erupted in opposition to the forest laws which later became an interregnal part of the national movement in the 1920s and second the Madras Government wanted the Forest department to concentrate on silviculture operations to increase revenue from forests resources

During the national liberation struggle violation of forest rules became a part of the struggle for instance the non cooperation movements during 1921 22 in Andhra [1] Peoples discontent on forest policies was expressed in the form of breaching forest laws and attacks on forest officials As a part of no the tax campaign people send their cattle into reserves

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PCCF No 229 22 October 1926 p 7
PCCF No 399 October 1928 pp 19 52
[4] C I Bough *The Madras Presidency* p 67
Atlury Murali *Civil Disobedience Movement in Andhra* p 157

without paying grazing fee The following incident illustrates the friction between the Forest department and people in the context of the national movement in Andhra To quote M Venkatarangya that The forest officer along with a Sub-Inspector of Police leading a party of twenty Constables seized fifty goats and one hundred and twenty she-buffaloes and were driving them to the pond at Mutkur when they were attacked by a crowed two to three hundred men and women The goats and most of the cattle were rescued and showers of sharp pointed stones continued to fell on the police The Sub-Inspector ordered his men to fire with the result that three fell dead and several were wounded [126] Thus the violation of forest rules and attacks on forest officials became a regular feature in Andhra during the national movement

Breaching of the forest laws became a common feature in some of the districts in Andhra For instance, reporting the situation in Cuddapah district the District Collector described that The boundary cairns were removed in many places and people began to trespass into the forests removing whatever they required The forest subordinates were completely terrorised and were helpless to do anything Cattle even goats were driven into the forests to graze without permits [127] While writing the violation of forest laws the Collector of Cuddapah District described that people entered into government forests and felled 1,700 red sander trees collected 99 cart loads of fuel wood and 625 cart loads of manure leaves were removed from reserved forests without permission And 2,500 goats were driven into reserved forests for browsing without permits [128] During the national movement, the very legitimacy of the forest laws was questioned and the popular discontent

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[126] M Venkatarangaiya *The Freedom Movement in Andhra Pradesh* Vol III p 38
[127] *Ibid* p 283
[128] *Ibid*

that was expressed by people was indication of that. Arun Agwaral argued that the colonial state adopted different strategies to retain its control over the forest resources in India. For him, the devolution of forest management powers to the local communities was given by the colonial state in order to pacify the peoples' discontent related to the access to forests.[129] It was in this context that the colonial state devolved the management responsibility of the minor forests to local bodies in different parts of India.

At the same time, the Madras Government wanted the Forest department to concentrate on the timber lagging operations by implementing silviculture techniques, which would generate more revenue. The changing character of the Forest department reflected in the words of the Conservator of Forests, to quote "the government will and henceforward show more confidence in the department by obtaining a generous increase in number, pay and updates forest organisation which will not only willing but able to deal all the various and important problems and questions of the day, as well as make rapid progress in the economic and industrial development of valuable state forests entrusted to its care the potential resources of many which remain almost untouched at the present day."[130]

Commenting on the necessary of the scientific methods to be adopted by the Forest department in Madras. The Conservator of Forests advocated that "Here forests wealth is immense and much of it only awaits the introduction of modern means of transport, a bolder investment of capital and the employment of extra staff, while the patient and labours work of conservation that has been staidly proceeding, joined with modern scientific methods of

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[129] Arun Agwral, "State Formation in Community Space? Decentralisation of Control over Forests in the Kumaun Himalaya, India", *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 60, No. 1[s], February 2001, p. 17.

[130] AARFD, 1917-18, p. 65.

improving supplies and increasing output' [31] This narrative shows the changing nature of the Forest department in the Madras Presidency It attempted to focus on silvicultural operations rather than, management of grazing and village forests In this context the Forest department supported the devolution of forest management to the local bodies It had willingly withdrawn from the management of grazing grounds The forest officials advocated the restoration of the customary rights of peasants by creating the forest *panchayats* to be managed by the local bodies

The real remedy to the peoples' grievances related to the access to forests was in the words of the Conservator of Forests in Northern Circle that " the ideal to be aimed at is the surrender of all forests on which the villagers depended on for their daily wants to the management of village interests itself but such a surrender must be accompanied by some guarantee that the forests are not destroyed by the selfishness of the present generation " [32] Thus the forest officers proposed that people were the appropriate managers to manage forest resources on which they depended upon However, this move was adopted by the Forest officials mainly to withdraw from the responsibility of managing unimportant forests and to focus on Silviculture operations

Thus the contestations of plain peasants the native newspapers mediation and some of the native revenue officials' articulation on creation of village forests converged with the forest officials' willingness to devolve forest management matured into the creation of forest *panchayats* However the tribes who critically depended on forests for survival could not raise their voice due to lack of mediating and negotiating agency with the colonial state As a

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Ibid p 66
AARFD, 1920 21

result of it their interests were marginalized But in the case of plain peasants due to better articulation and mediation by the press they could persuade the colonial state to transfer the forest management to local peasant communities One would observe similar trend in different parts of the Indian sub-continent for example the creation of *Van Panchayats* in Uttar Pradesh and Forest cooperatives in Kangra in the 1930s where local bodies were created to manage forests [133]

Expansion of the Forest Panchayats

Year	Area in Squire Miles
1927-28	3 389
1928-29	3 389
1929-30	*
1930-31	3 341
1931-32	3 338
1932-33	3 343
1933-34	3 335
1934-35	3 392
1935-36	3 392
1936-37	3 381
1937-38	3 385

Sources Compiled from the Proceedings of the Chief Conservator of forests of relevant years

The above table shows the forest area that was ultimately brought under the control of the forest *panchayats* Noticeably the area under supervision of the forest *panchayats* did not expand much, rather remained constant The reason seems to be that the experiment was not

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[1] Roger Jeffery and Nandini Sundar *A New Moral Economy for India's Forests? Discourse of Community Participation* Sage New Delhi 1999 p 27

as successful as it was expected, in the Madras Presidency Yet the department continued further with the experiment However, the forest *panchayats* experiment provided some relief to the plain peasants especially the grazing problem to some extent was addressed by this system

Grazing Revenue in Guntur District

Year	Income in Rs
1925 26	67 823
1926 27	56 352
1927-28	44 690
1928 29	42,907
1929 30	42 814
1930 31	39 538

Source Working Plan for the Guntur Upland Forests Government Press, Madras, 1934

The above table shows the steady decline in the income derived from the grazing sources to government It was attributed to the creation of forest *panchayats* in some parts of Gunter district where grazing management was give to forest *pahacyats* Though to some extent the constitution of the forest *panchayats* addressed the forest grievances particularly the grazing problems due in the course of time due to lack of government encouragement and internal struggles they could not provide desirable results By the 1950s most of the forest *pachayats* were taken back by the Forest department with the argument that of deterioration under the local communities management In spite of creation of the forest *panchayats* people continued to violate forest rules during the national movement violation of forest laws became symbol of nationalism

Forest Crimes during the National Movement in the Madras Presidency

Year	Cases Reported during the year
1920 21	23 947
1921-22	29 040
1922-23	32 874
1923 24	31 706
1924 25	32,164
1925 26	30,224
1926-27	25 321
1927 28	25 976
1928-29	*
1929 30	23,345
1930-31	24,798
1931-32	23 876
1932 33	29,471
1933-34	18 699
1934-35	28 242
1935 36	28 936

Source: Compiled from the Annual Administrative reports of Forest Department in the Madres Presidency and the Proceedings of Chief Conservator of Forests of relevant years * Details are not available

The above table shows the forest crimes reported during the years of anti-colonial struggles in the Madras Presidency In spite of the creation of forest *pancahyats* people violated the forest laws frequently at the time of political crisis These violations however does not minimise the positive role played by the Forest *panchayats* for to some extent mitigated the grievances caused by the forest rules But the forest *panchayats* seems to have, in the long run turned into institutions that catered to the needs of the rich peasants while the poor continued to suffer for want of necessaries from forests The crime rate recorded during the periods of anti-colonial struggles attests the fact that forest laws were very much violated especially by the small and poor peasants whose access was curtailed by the forest rules

The resistance shown by the people to the colonial forest policies in the Madras Presidency represents the classic example of how people resisted the policies that have curtailed the customary access to forest resources. The history of resistance by the plain peasants and incorporation of their demands in policy frameworks shows that the communities that have contested and mediated with the colonial state were able to influence policy to suit their interests. In this chapter we have shown that the colonial state went on relaxing the rigid forest rules due to the stiff resistance from the plain peasants. However the fact is that the transformation of forests from the management of community to state management for the sake of the colonial state s timber and revenue requirements, had serious implications on the livelihoods of the forest dependent communities in the Madras Presidency

VI
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The study of the British forest policies has been the focus of investigation in Indian historiography for the past two decades The legal and administrative forest management regimes that were formulated by the British continued to have a crucial bearing on the forest policies in independent India The quest to understand this historical context has guided the enquiry on the British forest policies These studies are aimed at evolving an appropriate understanding on the forest management regimes in the contemporary India which have roots in the colonial past

There are three historical narratives on the colonial forest policies in India First the narrative evolved in the works of Madhav Gadgil David Arnold Ramachandra Guha and Vandana Shiva who proposed that the colonial forest policies were formulated with the objective of monopolistic exploitation of the forest resources in India For them, provision of raw material for expanding infrastructure network and generation of revenue are the two important considerations that influenced the British approach on the management of forest resources They argued that the institutionalization of forest resource management systems by the British for acquiring the monopolistic control over the forests in India initiated the process of alienation and deprivation of forest communities from their traditional access to forests In this process the British forest policies tampered the traditional access to forests enjoyed by the forest dependent communities and unfortunately the colonial legacy continued to exercise influence on the evolution of forest policies in independent India This narrative argued that the forest management traditions that were practiced by the village communities in the pre colonial India were evolved in tune with the local eco system therefore, more prudent in terms of resource extraction The role of indigenous knowledge in forest management was highlighted by this approach At the same time these

writers have articulated a critique of state forestry that was evolved during the British rule and argued that the revenue and resource exploitation considerations were prioritised over livelihood dependency of the people in forests in India Thus Madhav Gadgil Ramachandra Guha and others located the contemporary problems associated with the state forestry in Indian in the context of colonial history

The second historical narrative was proposed by Richard Grove who argued that the colonial forest policies were not driven by the exploitive or revenue imperatives rather the environmental concerns of the colonial scientific community convinced the colonial state to formulate the forest conservation measures for safeguarding the climate rainfall and surface drainage systems For Richard Grove the colonial forest policies were not exploitative rather rooted in the conservation ethics that were aimed at protection of physical climate by way of conserving forests

The third narrative was proposed by historians like Atlury Murali Sivaramakrishnan, Vasant Sabarwal, Mahesh Rangarajan, Ajay Skariya and Arun Agrawal They have employed the exploitation versus conservation approach in different regional contexts in the Indian Sub continent They highlighted the local peculiarities and specificities and their interaction with the broad agenda of the colonial state which was aimed at transforming the forest landscape in India into resource generating zones This narrative focuses on the micro level study of various provinces under the British rule and documents the complex interaction between central and provincial governments and its influence on the nature of forest policies, their implementation and implications for the forest dependent communities The present study interrogates the concepts formulated by the above mentioned historical narratives in studying the much neglected area of the Madras Presidency

The present study perceived the forest landscape in the Madras Presidency as a 'contested domain' by various sections in society on the one hand, and within the state administrative structure on the other The main reason for these contestations was that the forest landscape in the Presidency constituted different meanings understandings and utilities to different communities and agencies For instance, for the Revenue department it was a barren space to be colonized by settled agriculture while for the Forest department it was an area for implementing silviculture practices and for people it was a source of livelihood Due to these divergent utilization interests and conceptions there existed multiple discourses by different stakeholders on forest policies in the Madras Presidency The present study demonstrates how these multiple discourses that depicted the peoples livelihood dependency ultimately converged in favor of state monopolistic control over forest landscape by alienating the traditional forest access exercised by the people in the Madras Presidency

The study primarily documents the process of the evolution of forest policies in the Madras Presidency In doing so, it focuses on the ideas and discourses that went into making of the forest policies in the Presidency This study argues that the colonial bureaucracy which was an important policy formulating agency was not a homogeneous entity rather it consisted of divergent ideological contestations on forest landscape The consequence of these contestations was the evolution of multiple policy narratives within the colonial bureaucratic structure in the Madras Presidency The existing scholarship on the colonial forest policies did not give much attention to the divergences and multiplicities of the colonial bureaucratic discourse on the forest management practices and their meaning for the formulation of forest policies in India The present study examines the ideas and discourses on the forest policies that reflected in the colonial officials discourses in the Madras Presidency

The process of evolution of the colonial forest policies was driven by two important imperatives in the Madras Presidency one, to extract timber for building infrastructure networks and the second was to derive revenue from forest resources The second chapter of our study shows how these imperatives were expressed in the officials discourses and at what level they were translated into state policies By 1800, the East India Company established its control on most of the territories in South India The expansion of British rule necessitated the creation of infrastructure for the speedy appropriation of resources. After 1800 the East India Company embarked upon the construction of shipbuilding in India This had generated heavy demand for timber It was this context that guided the British interventionist policies in the management of the forests in Madras.

Between the years 1800 and 1850 several forest management measures were initiated by the colonial state in the West Coast to procure teak wood that was used in shipbuilding During this period the British forest policies were mainly confined to conservation and exploitation of teak wood that was used in the shipbuilding During this period, large quantity of teak wood was used in shipbuilding that was a main mode of transport in India The Bombay Dockyard which had undertaken the shipbuilding both for domestic and international requirements had consumed enormous amount of teak wood At the same time, a large quantity of teak wood was exported to England that had undergone severe wood crisis in early part of the 19th century It was this appropriation of teak wood that resulted in massive deforestation and compelled the colonial state in formulating interventionist policies for the management of the forests in the Madras Presidency In other words the colonial forest policies were evolved in tune with the timber requirements that were generated by the infrastructure networks undertaken by the British both in the colony and in metropolis.

The degree of exploitation of forest resources had drastically increased after introduction of the railways in South India Expansion of the railway network consumed enormous amount of forest resources in the form of sleepers for railway track construction and for fuel wood for engine This increasing need initiated a new dimension in forest resource exploitation in the Madras Presidency Initially, the Madras Government concentrated on the exploitation of valuable timber trees But the pressing wood requirements of the railways compelled the colonial state to expand forest resource exploitation measures with systematic policy frameworks in all districts of the Madras Presidency As a result of these requirements, most of the forests in plain and hill areas were brought under monopolistic exploitation by the colonial state To meet the wood requirements of the railway companies, the administrative establishments were created for the management of forests in the Madras Presidency

It was this situation that created a context for formulation of an institutional establishment for the management of the forest resources in Madras Though the main reason for destruction of forests was exploitation of timber for the requirements of railways, but some of the surgeon generals, botanists and foresters depicted the hill tribals who live by practicing shifting cultivation for their subsistence needs as destroyers of forests In order to strengthen the institutional establishment of the Forest department, the forest officials propagated the conservation rhetoric that advocated for conservation of forests for protection of climate and surface irrigation sources It was this discourse that branded the symbiotic relation between tribals and forests as destructive in particular the shifting cultivation was projected as detrimental to the existence of forests With the conservation rhetoric, the Forest department achieved two objectives one, it imposed regulations on the tribals' access to forests and second, justified its intervention and control on forests with the argument of conservation of forests for protection of climate Thus, this

discourse legitimized the role of the Forest department as an appropriate agency for managing the forest resources in the Madras Presidency It was this context that the Forest department came into existence in 1856 mainly to provide the wood supplies to the railway companies We have shown in detail how the nature of colonial forest polices were mainly formulated to cater to the needs of private commercial classes and metropolis by undermining the needs of poor people, who were depended on neighboring forests for subsistence needs

However the scientific credential of the Forest department was not convincing enough to provide a comfortable place in the administrative structure of the colonial state The revenue officials in the Madras Presidency not only questioned the scientific credentials of the forest conservation but also argued that clearance of forests would improve public health and contribute revenue to the state in the form of land revenue Besides the revenue officials opposed the expansion of the Forest department control over plain forests and waste lands with the argument that it would lead to unnecessary interference in day-to-day lives of people and create troubles to local administration

The Forest department in the Madras Presidency was constantly pursued by the Government of India to show revenue surplus Due to this demand for revenue surplus by the Government of India the Forest department in Madras constantly attempted to generate revenue by exploiting forest resources rather than conserving them It also attempted to expand territorial control to meet its object of revenue generation Thus the conception of revenue generation from forests resources by excluding local people from accessing forests was institutionalized during the British rule

The ambition of the territorial expansion by the Forest department for generating revenue however was opposed by the Revenue department Vasant Sabrwal s study of the

Himalayan region and Mahesh Rangarajan s work on the Central Indian Provinces had demonstrated how the forest conservation policies were opposed by the revenue officials The Madras Presidency represents a classic example of the interdepartmental conflict and its impact on the discourse on forest polices The Forest department s attempt to acquire control over forest landscape was opposed by the revenue officials with the argument that the interference of forest rules in the day to day lives of people may unnecessarily create troubles to people and undermine the legitimacy of the colonial state. The main reason for this rivalry was however, rooted in the conflicting interests of the Revenue and Forest departments on forest landscape The Revenue department's object was to increase revenue by encouraging expansion of cultivation. while the Forest department wanted to acquire control over forests for expansion of plantations Thus, the opposite interests of the two departments resulted in an intense debate over the forest legislation that should be adopted for the Madras Presidency

After 1860s the colonial state realised the commercial value of forest resources and attempted to acquire monopolistic control in order to generate revenue This attempt was manifested in the form of promulgation of the Forest Act of 1865. Under the guidelines of this Act most of the provinces under the British rule have formulated their forest policies But this Act was not accepted by the Madras Government for it was argued that the forest legislation may tamper the rights of people over forests. The disagreement between the Governments of India and Madras resulted in prolonged debate on the forest legislation that should be adopted in Madras The third of chapter of our study documented the legal debates that took place in the Madras Presidency between the Governments of India and Madras on the one hand and between the revenue and forest officials on the other.

The legal debates that took place on the forest legislation in Madras centered on two issues one how to treat peoples' access to forests and second how to impose state control on forest landscape In this debate revenue officials supported by the Board of Revenue argued that the forests in the Madras Presidency were the common property of people and the rights of the state confined only to certain trees It was this debate that pronounced ideas and concepts that went into making of the Madras Forest Act of 1882

The disagreement between the Government of India and Madras provincial government on forest legislation has given rise for a debate on the nature of the property rights that should be adopted in the forest legislation in India The Madras Government articulated for the creation of legal rights for communities over forests while the Government of India, representing the interests of the colonial state had pressed for acquiring monopolistic control over forests by excluding local communities access to them

In our study we have shown how decisive were the opposite ideological perceptions of the forest and revenue officials on forest landscape and how they were responsible for multiple discourses on the forest policies that should be adopted by the Madras Presidency On the one hand the revenue officials perceived forest landscape and waste lands to be cleared for cultivation and on the other forest officials argued for conservation of forests The contested geographical space was degraded forests forest landscape adjacent to the settled agriculture areas and the village commons called the *porombokes* This conflicting interests of the forest and revenue departments resulted in a prolonged debate on forest legislation suitable for the Madras Presidency We have shown in detail in our study that due to the prejudice against the Forest department the revenue officials exaggerated the nature of the primacy of communal rights in the Madras Presidency The revenue officials

in reality used peoples' communal rights only as a rhetoric to oppose the powers of the Forest department

However the colonial state interest in acquiring the monopolistic control over forests was justified by some of the influential policy makers For instance Baden Powell argued that in the pre colonial era the peoples' access to forests existed in the form of privilege or concession that was allowed by the ruling powers at their will but not as a right enforceable by the law Thus, the centuries old forest usage pattern of people was treated as a privilege or concession that could be exercised by people so long as state permits Based on this notion of rights and privilege, Baden-Powell proposed the categorisation of forests as reserved, protected and village forests for an effective forest management Under this scheme, the reserved forests category was proposed for exclusive control of state and peoples' access was prohibited under the strict regime of conservation Protected forests were also declared as state property but peoples' access was allowed as a privilege or concession allowed to be exercised as long as state permits The underlying logic of this scheme was to facilitate the monopolistic control of the state over the forest resources by excluding people from accessing

Dr Brandis who was projected as the father of Indian forestry played a crucial role in formulating forest policies in India He forcefully articulated the argument that forest rights in India were user rights rather than property rights He also argued that village communities in India did not have any sense of scientific conservation and in fact were responsible for depletion of the forest cover Thus he justified the state control over the forests by excluding traditional access exercised by peoples in their neighboring forests By mid 1870s some form of consensus was arrived at within the colonial bureaucracy on the issue of forest legislation to be adopted in India that will ultimately aimed at creating the

state monopolistic control over forests This consensus has resulted in the promulgation of the Indian Forest Act of 1878 This Act declared the state ownership over forests and treated the forest utilisation pattern of people as privilege or concession granted by state at its will Thus the colonial forest laws were formulated to facilitate the exploitation of forest resources for the requirements of various government departments as well as source of revenue generation

However this consensus at all India level was not immediately accepted by the revenue officials and the Board of Revenue in the Madras Presidency Opposing the Indian Forest Act of 1878 they came up with the argument that the forests in the Madras Presidency were the common property of people who have used them from generations to generations without any state restrictions They also argued that though peoples rights were not recorded in documents, they enjoyed prescriptive rights over forests, which were longstanding in nature This debate led to delay on formulation of forest legislation in the Madras Presidency for a decade

Though the revenue officials articulated in favour of peoples' rights over forests they did not come up with practical suggestions on treatment of peoples' communal rights over forests Their argument was mainly aimed at constructing opposition to the expansion of the Forest department s territorial control by using the rhetoric of communal rights Even the Board of Revenue in the Madras Presidency was not in favour of an elaborative forest establishment and even argued that the forest rules may deprive the livelihoods of people and create anti-government fellings and result in confrontation with state The Board of Revenue also argued that legal restrictions on access to neighboring forests for grazing fire wood green manure wood for small agricultural implements and minor forest products may deprive people of daily as well as long term necessities and push them to

revolt against government machinery However, the Government of India determined to bring the forests in the Presidency under the legal jurisdiction of the colonial state To achieve this objective Dr Brandis was sent by the Government of India to formulate forest act in the Madras Presidency He convinced the Madras Government by proposing a scheme that integrated the objective of forest conservation and silviculture operations with the provision of fuel and fodder for people Thus under the pressure of the Government of India and persuasive influence of Dr Brandis the Madras Government formulated the Madras Forest Act of 1882

Thus the Madras Forest Act of 1882 was promulgated which facilitated the monopolistic control of state over forest landscape in the Presidency This Act declared the forest landscape as state property and divided the forest lands into reserved forests reserved lands and open forests Under this Act reserved forests were settled as state estates free from peoples' rights and reserved lands category was created to identify the suitable forests for converting them into reserved forests The Revenue department's articulation on communal forests did not have any impact on the Madras Forest Act 1882 for it did not contain any provision on communal or village forests Though at one level there was a sensitive discourse on peoples' rights it was ultimately subsumed under the state decision in favor of state monopoly through forest laws The Madras Forest Act of 1882 represented a classic example of this process

The Madras Forest Act of 1882 shows that the nature of colonial rule in India basically catered to the interests of elite and influential sections of society at the expense of the poor This Act exempted *Zamindari and Inamdari* lands from its scope of reservation There was no provision in the Act that proposed for the creation of village or communal forests to meet the requirements of people It was left to the discretion of the Forest

Settlement Officer who was empowered to allocate lands for the requirements of peoples at the time of settlement of forests as reserve forests Thus, the Madras Forest Act of 1882 formulated a homogenous legal and administrative structure and prepared an agenda for the monopolistic state control over the forests in the Madras Presidency

After promulgation of the Madras Forest Act of 1882 the Madras Government undertook extensive reservation of forests in both hill and plain areas All virgin and natural forests were declared as state property and the tribals who were living in and around them were pushed out from ancestral lands Besides forest reservation also incorporated most of the mixed and minor forests and common lands to generate revenue from grazing This change severely affected the forest dependent communities especially tribals pastoral communities and poor plain peasants Promulgation of the Madras Forest Act 1882 and its implementation not only reserved the forests in Madras, as state property but also formulated elaborative legal and administrative regimes for regulating peoples' access to forests

In the present study, we have examined in detail some of the case studies of the forest settlements instituted in different districts in the Madras Presidency These settlements demonstrates the way in which peoples' customary assess to forests was excluded by the colonial state in the Presidency The Madras Forest Act of 1882 gave a period of three months for people to put forward claims for rights on the forests proposed for reservation Most of the Forest Settlement Officers while conducting forest settlement process argued that all the people's claims put forwarded before them could not be admitted as rights rather they could be treated as privileges or concessions which may allowed to be exercised as long as state permits Thus the state ownership was established over forest resources by excluding the customary rights of people in the Madras Presidency

The main purpose of the forest reservation was therefore to create the state ownership over forests and waste lands in the Presidency in order to extract revenue from forest resources Thus the forest landscape was brought under the technocratic supervision of the Forest department for catering the timber needs of the colonial state This process severely affected the traditional forest dependent people whose livelihoods were critically dependent on access to their neighboring forest resources The government reservation of forests as permanent state s estates with legal and administrative powers brought about everlasting misery to forest dependent communities in the Presidency

The noticeable fact is that the Forest department was not the sole agency under which forest exploitation was carried out In the Madras Presidency at each and every level i e, circle to village, the powers of the Forest department were subjected to the supervision of the Revenue department Especially in the plain areas, the District collectors were made the practical heads in forest administration Our study illustrated how the Forest department's powers in forests located in the plain areas were regulated by the revenue department in the Presidency In a way the colonial state by not allowing the Forest department to implement its ambitious conservation agenda of controlling the minor forests tried to create leverage to people whose livelihood dependency on forests was critical

The interesting feature of the forest policies in the Madras Presidency was that there was a rigorous debate within the colonial bureaucracy on the need to create village forests to meet the requirements of people Some of the revenue officials argued that the forests which were close to villages should be given to the villagers for their management The main factor behind this recommendation was the local revenue establishments which perceived forest rules as unnecessary interference in day to day lives of people which may

cause trouble to general administration However the revenue and wood requirements of the colonial state were such that in 1890 the village forests scheme was abandoned and the Madras Government undertook the extensive reservation of forests Under this scheme most of the hill and plain forests were brought under the government control and peoples access to forests was restricted with strict punishment and penalty mechanisms

By 1900 about 20 000 squire miles of the forest landscape i e 35% of the unclaimed land in the Madras Presidency was brought under reservation as state property This resulted in far reaching changes in the relationship between people and forests Both hill tribes and plain peasants were denied the customary access and were compelled to pay tax on forest products Especially in plain areas the Madras Government imposed heavy grazing tax on the cattle that grazed in reserved forests This resulted in severe inconvenience to the people in accessing forests in the Madras Presidency

In our study we have documented the public discontent that was expressed against the forest policies in the Madras Presidency We have shown how the peasants and tribals expressed their discontent on forest policies through various methods like petitions and writings in native newspapers violation of forest laws damaging reserved forests and killing the forest subordinates The public discontent even questioned the very legitimacy of the colonial state in implementing the forest policies in the Presidency

The fifth chapter of our study demonstrates the strategies adopted by the colonial state in addressing the public discontent In the hill areas, the Madras Government systematically incorporated the tribals into forest conservation operations as wage labour The tribals were employed as labourers in reserve forest conservation operations like timber logging fire tracing boundary clearing and collection of minor forest products Occasionally concessions were given to tribals for carrying shifting cultivation and the

collection of minor forest products under the condition of extending their labour to the Forest department Thus, the tribal labour force was being used by the Forest department as cheap labourers in forest conservation operations and on many occasions tribes were forced to perform *vetti* (unpaid) labour to the Forest Department Especially the tribes like the *Chenchus* and Khonds who were considered as violent group systematically absorbed into forest conservation operations as labour force, a significant deviation from their traditional life style The tribal deprivation could also be seen in two ways one the forest conservation operation undertaken by the Forest department created a conducive atmosphere for migration of the plain based contractors to tribal areas who exploited the tribes by squeezing their chief labor and second was the Forest department imposed strict regulations on shifting cultivation which was one of the main sources of livelihood These processes aggravated the problems of tribals who expressed discontentment on forest polices through the series of revolts in the Andhra Agency Areas

In the plain areas, due to better educational and awareness level, the peasants put forwarded petitions on the problems aroused due to the government reservation of forests and they demanded for access to reserve forests for grazing and other forest products The present study documented the petitions put forward by the plain peasants on the grievances related to accessing forests These petitions showed the micro level public discontent on the state intervention in the management of forests Besides this the native newspapers also actively highlighted the peasants problems related to restrictions on access to forests In response to the public discontent the Madras Government initiated the process of devolution of management responsibilities of forests in the plain areas in the form of creation of forest panchayats after 1915 Under this the forests that are used by people for every day needs were given for the management of the forest *panchayats* by creating an executive body with the representatives of villagers After 1925 Ryots Forests were

created and their management responsibility was given to elected body under the name of the forest *panchayats*. This measures shows the fact that the communities which have contested and mediated with the colonial state acquired concessions in accessing forests products

In the present study we have shown that the dependency of people on forests was such that the state legitimacy was questioned by the contestations of the people in the Madras Presidency. In order to overcome these contestations, the colonial state accommodated the contestations that posed threat to the legitimacy of state into the policy framework. The creation of the forest *panchayats* was an example of such measures in the Madras Presidency. Thus, the present study proposed to argue that though the colonial state imposed monopolistic control over forest resources, some times it was compelled to acknowledge the peoples' contestations and accommodated them into broader policy frame works. However, relaxations were given to communities under the framework of concessions or usufruct rights wherein state retained its discretion to continue or discontinue. The independent Indian government introduced the Joint Forest Management or Participatory Forest Management with the same logic.

However, the fact is that the colonial state initiated the process of the commercialization of forests at the cost of the local communities. At the same time, most of the forests were legalized and brought under bureaucratic regulations. This led to the several conflict of people for the forest resource. The communities contested for access were accommodated in the forest policy framework.

After the 1950s, the independent Indian state embarked upon the forest policy formulation process, unfortunately the colonial forestry framework was inherited by it. The forest polices in the post-independent India were guided by certain imperatives such as dire

necessary of the agrarian expansion that had resulted in the more waste and forest lands were brought under the cultivation At the same time Indian Government embarked up on the rapid industrialization in order to augment the revenue It resulted in extraction of massive forest resources as raw material for various industries from the forest resources Thus the exploitation of the forest resources by state to cater the requirements of industries and various government departments was the legacy of the colonial forest policies

The examination of the history of colonial forest polices in the Madras Presidency helps to build up a trajectory of the colonial forest polices which are continued to be remained in force with slight modification For instance the Andhra Pradesh Forest Act of 1967 was structured on the similar lines of the Madras Forest Act of 1882 The analysis done by the present study on the colonial forest polices enables to locate the mistakes committed by the colonial state forestry that continuous to remain in force with some modifications After 1980s there was a desperate attempt by civil society and to some extent by government to reorient the direction forest policies and made them more pro-poor and people friendly This work is a small contribution in the direction of understating the dynamics and politics of state forestry that was formulated by the British in the Madras Presidency

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