

SOME PROBLEMS OF MANAGEMENT AND PRICING ON THE IRRIGATION WORKS IN BOMBAY¹

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THE object of this paper is to provide a brief account of the development of water rate policy in Bombay State, and also of the principles which seem to underlie the management of its irrigation works, since the turn of the 19th century. No attempt is made to trace the earlier history of water charges, first, because irrigation was little practised in Bombay during the 19th century and canal irrigation was very little developed; and secondly, because the present authors could not obtain the irrigation administration reports for the years before 1894. While the total storage available in 1877 was enough to irrigate an area of about 2,00,000 acres, only about 25,000 acres were in fact irrigated in that year,² as against a total of 7,35,452 acres irrigated in 1953-54 from all sources of State irrigation.³ The authors believe that Bombay irrigation calls for a separate treatment because both the method of charging for the service and the operation and management of the works have evolved somewhat differently than in many other parts of the country.

The earlier part of the paper is taken up with an analysis of the management of the works. This is followed by a review of both the development of water rates and water rate policy. An attempt is made towards the end to bring the two together and to build up a picture of the irrigation system as it appears today.

The Bombay irrigation works, like those in other provinces, have been classified in the administration reports under various heads. All the works the capital for which was obtained from public loans have been classed as 'major', while those whose construction was financed entirely from the general revenues of government have been designated as 'minor'. The system of obtaining loan finance for the construction and extension of irrigation works in the country was introduced in 1869; all 'major' works in India thus belong to the post-1869 period. The distinction between 'major' and 'minor' works is not quite logical and is sometimes misleading, since a number of works put up before 1869 are more important in regard to

¹ The division of the older Bombay State into Maharashtra and Gujarat is only a few months old. Whatever is said in the following pages applies to the area of the former State of Bombay and to the present Maharashtra State, excluding all the districts of Vidarbha and Marathwada.

² *Report of the Indian Famine Commission*, Her Majesty's Stationery Office London, 1880, Part II, p. 85.

³ *Irrigation Administration Report (Bombay)*, Director, Government. Printing, Publications and Stationary, Bombay State, 1953-54. Part II, pp. iii-iv.