

COLONIAL ADMINISTRATION OF NATIVE GRANT CHARITABLE INSTITUTIONS IN TIRUNELVELI REGION WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO MOTURPHA INAMS

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Abstract

The inam grants were broadly classed into four divisions – religious, charitable, personal or subsistence and service grants of which the charitable grants bestowed for various charities formed the foremostone. Charitable institutions like chattram and choultries and the inams connected therein were innumeraably found in Tirunelveli district. The native rulers like The Nayaks and The Nawabs extensively granted inams for religious as well as charitable services in the chattram and choultries. The Moturphainam was a specific kind seemed to have existed only in Tirunelveli. This Motrubha inamdars were allowed to collect tax from the manufacturing community and the amount was used for the benefit of choultries. When the British abolished the Moturpha tax and commuted into the assignment of lands in 1863, considering the charitable activities connected with it. The inam commission established in 1858 examined the inam tenures in Tirunelveli district in general and the disputes related to the charitable Institutionsin particular. The British, by and large, allowed the functioning of charitable institutions if the activities were uninterrupted.

Keywords: Inam, Chattram and Choultries, Dharmadeyam, Moturpha, Annas and paisa, Maladministration, Legitimate object, Inam abolition, beneficial tenure.

Introduction

Inam grants in various forms were invariably found throughout the Madras Presidency right from the Sangam Age. Dharmadeyam grants form the foremost one amongst in all the quarters of the Madras Presidency. In addition to the religious institutions, the native governments, ie , the Nayaks and Nawabs donated lands for the establishment of chattrams (travelers inn)and choultries and its preservation. Before the company's assumption, numerous chattrams were kept preserved in Tirunelveli district. After the arrival of the British, they clearly laid down rules to create new choultries. Notwithstanding, the maintenance or administration of choultries was the same as in the previous period. The expenses of the charitable institutions were met out by Moturpha taxes. Before the formation of the Inam commission, the British made an enquiry about the existence and offerings in the chattrams and choultries. But in case of the earmarked amount ceased, due to any dispute, the British made arrangement for the immediate distribution of money.

Orgin and Kinds of Inam

Originally inam was an Arabic term. ¹ It was used to imply the sense of a grant of freehold interest. ²In south India , the origin of inam tenures can be traced to a very remote antiquity.³ The kings and the ministers acting under the king made inam grants to the adherent individuals for their remarkable services done to the state. Sometimes, this kind of beneficial tenure was bestowed for the benefit of temples, charitable institutions, churches, mosques, chattram, water pandal, learned men, and public services. ⁴These beneficial inams were made in a solemn and impressive manner.⁵ The inam grants were found engraved on copper plates or slabs of stone and they had been declared to be irrevocable so long as the sun and moon endures.⁶

Charitable Inams

In respect to the object of the grant, inams were classed into four major divisions- religious, charitable, personal, or subsistence and service grants.⁷ Among the four significant divisions of inams, there were more than twenty kinds of sub division. The inams held for the support of schools, colleges, choultries, water pandals, matams (muts), tanks,

ponds, wells, bridges and channels were called as charitable inams. Entitled as Dharmadeyam inams, these charitable institutions continued them so long as the services were kept up.⁸ Almost all the ancient inams were connected with temples, charitable institutions and individuals. The Native rulers granted inams for the purpose of lighting lamps and performing certain ceremonies in temples and mosques. Some times, manyams were conferred to feed persons and perform poojas in religious institutions.⁹ Some temples were donated inams to perform musical instruments and reading Puranas.¹⁰ In some places, inam grant was made in the form of salt to meet the expenses of the inamdar who was appointed to read Koran and lighting lamps in the mosque.¹¹

Moturpha Inam

It was a special form of Inam seemed to have existed only in Tirunelveli District. The word Moturpha is derived from 'Muhatarfa' which in turn is etymologically derived from the Arabic term Hirfa which means handicraft.¹² The moturpha tax was levied on the manufacturing, trading or business community i.e. the artisans like weavers, cleaners, shepherd, goldsmith, braziers etc. The moturpha inamdars were allowed to collect certain amount of tax from the aforesaid dwelt in Tirunelveli District. For the benefit of the choultries in the district, the moturpha allowance was used. But this kind of moturpha tax was completely abolished under the Act XVIII of 1860.¹³ Since the abolition, the charities in the chattram and choultry were ceased to exist. Due to various representations made by J.Silver, the then collector of Tirunelveli to the Board, it sanctioned ready money in lieu of Moturpha tax.¹⁴ The Board ratified to pay the amount from the general fund of the District as compensation.¹⁵ The Board after confirming the institutions for which the grant was made allowed to continue it. The aggregate allowance in support of the choultries around Tirunelveli was 4,809 rupees, ten annas and eight paise. Collector J.Silver was directed to give details about the nature of accommodation provided and the number of travelers got benefitted. In this way the British confirmed the accommodation in the charitable institutions.¹⁶

Even after the abolition of the moturpha tax, the British issued some orders. Accordingly, the moturpha tax was commuted into the assignment of lands in 1863.¹⁷ According to the Government order No 1166 and 2082, issued on 2nd July 1863, and 20th November 1863, the old allowances paid to the charitable institutions from the deduction of old moturpha tax were commuted into assignment of land revenue. Despite the assignment of land was made in 1863, no sincere registration was made in the registers. So this matter was brought to the notice of the inam Commissioner.¹⁸

Inam commission

Generally intricate in nature, the inam tenures in Tirunelveli District was very difficult to deal with.¹⁹ The court of Directors had already realized the necessity of the appointment of a special commission to examine the inam tenures.²⁰ Thus, the inam commission was established on 16th November 1858 under the administration of Lord Harris and G.N.Taylor.²¹ Made as a powerful organ, this commission consisted of a commissioner, two special assistants and number of deputy collectors. It started its operation in 1859 and the settlement in the District came to an end in 1864.²² By and large, it dealt with all forms of inam and very particularly the moturpha.

After the establishment of the commission Sir Charles Traveyan assumed charge as the Governor of Madras.²³ Under his instruction, G.N.Taylor, the inam commissioner propounded certain rules in his minutes. These were accepted by the court of Directors and invariably applied during enquiry.²⁴ Also, he drafted some rules for the guidance of the officers who dealt with inams. The regulation XXX of 1836 looked after the inams granted by the earlier rulers and the native government. Rule ii and iii dealt with the validity of the titles established. It consisted of the grants or endowments to religious and charitable institutions and for the services therein was framed in section iii.²⁵ The inams conferred for charitable institutions were not disturbed by the commission, provided the services therein were regular and uninterrupted.

Chattram and choultries

Melamadai, a village in the Ottapidaram taluk in (erstwhile) Tirunelveli district had a choultry by name kallurani. One Angayarkanni of Srivaikundam owned the choultry. This choultry was made out of small bricks. Built in 1751 by Chanda Sahib, this choultry provided accommodation to Brahmins and Sudras. In addition, three Brahmins were provided food daily. The native government endowed two villages namely Vedapatti and Kallurani in support of the choultry.²⁶

In addition to the rulers, the affluent communities especially like the chettiers offered funds for the establishment of choultries. A Subramaniya Chetti choultry in Kurukuthurai village in Tirunelveli was owned by one Guruvanam Chetty and Pattabiraman Chetty. The native government established it in 1794 during the rule of Mohamed Ali and maintained it in a good manner. Two description villages namely Sodiyaattur and Aligudi were

granted to meet the expenses of the choultry. Constructed in a substantial stone building, the choultry earned rupees 905 per annum through the two description or manyam villages. Twelve Brahmins were fed daily in the choultry. An amen, curnam, cook and a sweeper were employed in the choultry. They were remunerated on the basis of their rank or posts. The British continued the manyam without any interruption.

In the name of kallurani another one choultry was established in Venkataramasamudram in the Kadambur Zamindari in Ottaipidaram taluk. One Sundara Kaliammal owned that choultry. The native government, in 1795 under Muhamed Ali endowed sixteen acres of wet and 265 acres of dry land in the Venkataramasamudram village for it. Besides, a shrotrium village and 65 acres of dry land in the village of Kadampur was also granted in support of it. It yielded a revenue of rupees 197 per annum.²⁷

One Lachipuram chattram was situated on the road No.12 between Tirunelveli and Tiruchendur.²⁸ This chattram belonged to Tenkarai taluk. (An erstwhile Taluk in Tirunelveli District) Vijayaranga Chokanatha had conferred it. As it measures for charity works, it offered supply of water to travelers. This chattram obtained rupees 30, 8 anna and 9 paise from the moturpha tax of the area. Another one Manthai chattram, was situated on the same road and in the same taluk. This chattram was constructed in 1795 during the rule of Mohammad Ali to distribute food to every travelers passing through the way. The food was given twice a month.²⁹ From the moturpha tax, a ready money amount of rupees 15, 4 anna and 4 paise was sanctioned to the chattram.

British and choultries

Like the previous native rulers, the British also granted lands for the construction of choultries. The intended person of constructing a choultry had to get permission from the Revenue Board. The plan and estimate of the choultry proposed was informed to the government. The government was strictly prohibited to occupy the choultry buildings except during special purpose.³⁰ The opening of a new choultry was informed to the public. The established choultries provided accommodation to all classes of travelers without any discrimination. The British usually granted dry lands yielding the revenue of sixty rupees per year.³¹ The collector of the district was directed to inform the position and purpose of the choultry. If it was found that the choultry endowment was fraudulently used for any other purpose other than the legitimate object, the allotted amount was stopped and it was used to hospital or asylum where the destitute, the poor, the sick and the mentally incapacitated people were helped. Cooked rice was generally recommended to them. Travellers were not allowed to stay more than 24 hours except the sick. The British maintained the choultry administration without any particularization. Sometimes, the inhabitants of the nearest place formed a small committee to manage the choultry. The taluk and village officers supervised the distribution of food.³²

The British as their part, munificently bestowed ready money allowances for the smooth running of the already established charitable institutions. In Srivaikundam taluk, one kurumbur chattram was sanctioned rupees 40, eleven annas and eight paise per annum for the daily distribution of food to the travelers. Another one Vadichattram situated on the road between Tuticorin and Tiruchendur was sanctioned five rupees six annas and five paise as ready money for its expenses. In the Nanguneri taluk one chattram situated in the village of Chattram on the road No. 6 between Tirunelveli and Travancore. Food was offered to the way going travelers. Asum of rupees thirty eight, fifteen annas and five paise was sanctioned in 1856 to meet the expenses for food. In the Sankaranayinarkovil cusba, there was one chattram situated on the road leading to Srivilliputtur. Asum of rupees two and eighty eight paise was sanctioned for the distribution of food to the travelers.³³

Conclusion

The British knew well that the land revenue was the nucleus among all the sources of income. During the investigation of the Inam commission in the District, it tried to abolish many forms of inams for even flimsy reasons. But with regard to charitable inams it did not interfere. In turn, it allowed charitable activities in any one of the way, provided the services were uninterrupted. Even after the Inam Settlement in 1864, disputes and discrepancies connected with all kinds of inams arose in one way or other until the minor Inam Abolition and conversion into Ryotwari and Tamil Nadu Inam Estate and Abolition and conversion into Ryotwari Acts were passed in 1963.

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