

Administration of Inam Lands Under Thanjavur Marathas

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Abstract

The word 'Inam' was derived from 'Arabic language, which means land ownership in feudal India that was completely or partially freed from term 'Inam' was often used to designate a grant in the broad sense (money, clothes, positions and privileges). In India under the Muhals, the term was used for the small plots of land that belonged to priestly attendants or to temples; this was fully related with Muslims. In southern India, the term also referred to the plots of land of the leaders of a community and the artisans. In the Maratha principalities of India, the privileged land of the feudal lords, which were their own private property, were called 'Inams'. In this way, when the Marathas who established their kingdom in Thanjavur, from that, they had implemented the 'Inam' privileges for their royal kin and kith. The present study is aimed to focus the 'Inam grants' particularly chatrams and Mukhala Inams of Maratha rulers.

Keywords: Inam , lands, Marathas, manyam, chatrams

Introduction

The grant as Inams of whole villages or portions has been a marked feature of the reign of almost every Maratha Raja, who ruled over Thanjavur in the latter part of the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries. There were no Inam grants in this district, but at the same true, the Cholas had donated 'Dhanam' (free lands to the religious institutions and village meanials).

The Mahratta rulers converted into grants of their own purposes. The grants made by the Maharatta rulers considered almost wholly of endowments to religions and charitable institutions and grants for the benefit of individuals, the latter chiefly Brahmins of the former category, the most important and notable were the grants of several villages for the keep of the many Chatrams constructed by various Mahratta ariers ad their consorts, intruded for the accommodation of pilgrims to Rameswaram in the south.³ The Mahratta rulers had done enormous services to the Hindu and other religious institution, especially, the pilgrimages, which were from North India. They crossed Thanjavur district to reach Rameshwaram and other holy places in Southern Tamil Nadu. The primary aim of the paper is to trace the welfare measures of the Mahratta rulers through their Inam grants.

Establishment of Chatrams

The Mahratta rulers established some of the important Chatrams, these were like the modern travelers banglows. The Chatrams were the residents of the travelers, pilgrims and orphans, etc. the principal Chatrams among these were the Muktabalpuram Chatram in Orathanad, the Yamunambalpuram Chatram at Nidamangalam, the Moahnambalpuram Chatram at Rajamadam, the sulukkshanambalpuram Chatram at Vilangulam the Dropathambalpuram Chatram at Manalmegudi and Rajakumarambalpuram Chatram at Mimisal. The grant bulk of the Inam grants was made by Rajah, Pratap Singh and Talsaji between the years 1790 and 1797.AD⁷. In addition to this Inam grants made by the Mahratta rulers, there were also several grants both whole villages and of portions thereof made by the Zamindars of the district several such Inams have been granted by the Iamindars of Pappanad, Madukkur, Gandavarkottai, Attivetti and Palayavam. These were also like the royal grants being mainly grants for the upkeep of religious or charitable institutions and grants for the benefit on individuals, chiefly Brahmins.⁵

Mukhasa Inams

Mukhasa tenure, peculiar to Thanjavur district was a complex one, Mukhasa villages accounted for a considerable part of the total area of Inam estates in the district. These were lands which were retained by the Rajah of Thanjavur, being lands which were in his immediate enjoyment, at the time of the Treaty of 1799 by which the Tanjore country was ceded to the East

India Company.⁶ These lands continued to be in the enjoyment of the Rajah till 1855, when following the death of the last Rajah without male heirs as stated earlier his estate including the lands were seized by the East India company. The claim of the company was based on the principle of escheat – consequent on failure of heirs but the seizure was upheld later as an act of state by the privy council in “Kamarchi Bai Sahiba Vs Secretary of State in Council”.⁷ However in 1862 on a memorial from the widow and heirs of the Rajah, the lands were restored to Kamatchi Bai Sahiba, the senior Rani , on behalf of the heirs of the late Rajah and they have continued to be the private properties of the Rajah’s family since then. There have been a number of alienations and partitions among the members of the family.⁸ Also there have been a number of exchanges of these Mukhasa lands with lands under the control of the Government with a view to consolidate the Rajah’s estate and around Thanjavur . Also there seems to have been a number of cases of alienations by the Rajah, out of the lands which were left in his enjoyment after 1799, even before 1855, mostly in favour of Religious and charitable institutions. There were a number of such cases in villages which continued to be treated as Mukhasa mostly vesting in religious institutions under the management of the palace Devasthanam.⁹

No consolidated list of Mukhasa lands which were seized and restored in 1862.¹⁰ The earliest record showing the Mukhasa lands was a notification issued by the collector in 1868, purporting to contain a list of Mukhasa villages and Thottams. In this notification only 139 villages have been mentioned, whereas at the time of coming into force of the Estates Abolition Act, There were 199 Mukhasa units.¹² The number was increased by the result of the subdivisions of the Mukhasa villages or the result of exchanges by which additional units were acquired by the Rajah.¹³ whether the units now existing but not notified in 1868 were parts of Mukhasa villages notified in 1868 or not. It was a matter to be inferred from geographical contiguity or grouping in the successive surveys which have taken place.

No complete record of the lands got in exchange by the Rajah where a village not notified 15 1868 cannot be treated as a part of any village so notified, owing to its being situated as an independent unit, the only inferences possible were that either it is a unit got in exchange by the Rajah in the subsequent exchanges already referred to or that the notification on 1868 was not complex.¹³

One such village was Inambur Thenpathy in Kumbakonam taluk, which was being treated as an Independent Mukhasa village but is not found in the notification of 1868 and it cannot be treated as part of any Mukhasa village notified in 1868. Since it is situated away from Thanjavur. It was not reasonable to pressure that it formed part of any exchange, because the purpose of the exchanges was to consolidate the estate of the Rajah near Thanjavur.¹⁴

The Inam Commission of 1861 went into the history of all the inams in the district which existed on the date of the British assumption, whether granted by the Maharatta rulers or by poligars confirmed by the issue of title deeds such of the Inams as satisfied the conditions for confirmation by the Inam Commission several of the personal inams had changed hands by then and communities other than Brahmin were also represented among the holders of such inams. Further the Inam Commission had investigated the Thanjavur district. It issued title deeds in respect of all inams, whether consisting of whole villages or not. However, Mukhasu villages were not dealt with by the Inam Commission¹⁵. When the Inam commission commenced its work in the district, these lands were in the possession of the Government¹⁶. The alienations made out of the Mukhasa lands will be treated as private property and dealt with by the Inam Commissioner¹⁷.

The consequent on the restoration to the family of the Rajah, of the villages, in which the alienations were situated. The instruction was also given to the Inam Commissioner for treating the alienations¹⁸. Up to this level, the Inam commissioner had refused to deal with certain lands on the ground that it was not clearly that they did not form part of Rajah's Mukhasa lands.

These lands were allowed to continue in the possession of the grantees even when the Thanjavur palace estate was seized by the Government.¹⁹ It has been ordered that such alienation will be dealt with by the Inam commissioner, the other lands in the immediate enjoyment of the Rajah being regarded as lapsed to state. This was in accordance with the policy adapted in regard to such alienations in the nature of Inam.

Following the restoration of the lands to the Rajah's family the government divided not to deal with these alienations as independent minor inams. This was shown that whatever might have been the nature and the terms of the grant when it was made. The Government did not treat them as distinct from the Mukhasa lands. Therefore, the position was that the *melwaram* of Mukhasa villages including this land was granted to the Thanjavur Rajah's family in 1862.²⁰

because, judicial decisions have laid down clearly that the restoration of 1862 should be denied to be a grant and root of the title.

Conclusion

The inam villages in Thanjavur district were the subject matter of enquiries under section 9 of the Madras (Abolition and conversion into Ryotwari) Act, 1958 (Act XXVT of 1948) before it repeated. The tenure of some of the Mukhasa villages was also enquired into under section 9, but the enquiry was not completed and was not based on a comprehensive examination of Mukhasa villages. In many cases groups as existing the included several villages notified in 1868 were dealt with as single units and orders passed. The procedure does not seem to be uniform, in some cases parts of some groups have been dealt with separately. All the 99 Mukhasa villages have been taken over, mostly under the Abolition Act, 1948 and in the few excepted cases where the grant was found to be of both warams they have been taken over under Act 26 of 1963.

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