

## Inscriptions of Early Deccan : A Case Study of Land Grants

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The king made grant of a village or a plot of land in the Deccan. The rights and privileges of the donee were quite different of a village or an inhabited area. Sometimes the land was granted with pariharas like A- praveshya (free from the entry of royal agents) Anavamarsya (free from troubles associated with the visit of royal agents) Alavana-Khataka (free from the land dugout or the trees being pierced for salt) and Arashtrasamvinayika (free from the administrative control to which the district was subject) sometimes sarvajata-bhoga-nirasta was used to make free from all kinds of royal control.<sup>1</sup>

The pariharas are more clear in the latter period. Following pariharas are mentioned in the Tirodi<sup>2</sup> plate of Pravarsena II. No payment of taxes, no interference by soldiers and umbrella bearers, no obligation regarding the supply of the cows and bullocks in succession, no state royalties on flowers and milking, no pasturage by state cattle, no obligation regarding the supply of hide and charcoal, no digging out of salt and other moist substances and exemption from force labour and hidden treasures and deposit and taxes are enjoyed by the grantees.

These charters are not associated with the donation over whole village. The donees were not allowed to interfere in the peasant-free holders of their respective land holding. Bose<sup>3</sup> opines that the assignment is only of revenue and of ownership and usufruct when villages are disposed of along with tillers and their holding. This statement is also supported by a clause enjoining upon the holders of the gift land to pay the donees whatever dues they could legally claim as rent of taxes,

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(Pratyaya), produce of fields (meya), etc. The Vilavatti inscription<sup>4</sup> informs that the inhabitants of village of Vilavatti should pay the taxes to the donee whatever taxes to be paid to the king.

The rulers are different when a small cultivable plot was donated. Gautmiputra Satakami made a gift of some land to monks in the sense that the plot was to be maintained by the grantees as indicated from a Nasik inscription.<sup>5</sup> Similarly Rishabhadatta donated a plot to the ascetic.<sup>6</sup> The Utlam plate<sup>7</sup> of Hastivarman issued warning not to obstruct Jayasarma in maintaining two and half of land which he got as a gift from the king. It shows that the proprietary right was given to the grantees over a small piece of land.

The future rulers also promised to protect the grant as quoted by Aparaka, Brihaspati<sup>8</sup> says that an edict should record along a gift of land that heaven would be awarded to the respecter of the grant.

The confiscator of the gift-land is condemned in the inscriptions and lawbooks.<sup>9</sup> An inscription<sup>10</sup> shows that a guilt may be punished severely and buried in the seventh hell, who defies the gift.<sup>11</sup> Hirahadagalli plate<sup>12</sup> indicates that a person may be punished if he dares to harm the donee whether he is associated to king. The kings of the Pallava dynasty or other dynasties be showered with blessings who honour the gift. Those who deny the gifts are lowest man loaded with guilt of the five moral sins.<sup>13</sup> These indicate that there was a fear of the land grants being revoked.<sup>14</sup>

The inscriptions show that the king did not confiscate land once granted but in certain cases he might break the grant. Swamidasa issued warning to a brahman donee he could retain the grant till he violated the conditions of brahmadeya grant.<sup>15</sup> The grant<sup>16</sup> of Pravarsena II is more clear. It indicates that the condition of the grant be respected by the brahman and future rulers. The brahmins could hold the control over the grant as long as they do not commit treason against the king.<sup>17</sup> The donees also ceased their right over the donated land if they abandoned the same. The Malavalli inscription<sup>18</sup> shows that a king of Kadamba dynasty renewed the gift of villages of somapatti. Konginar, Mariyasa, Karpennala, ekkathhara and sahala to Sri Nagatta. The record goes on to say that the necessity of granting the villages for the second time was due to the abandonment of the ownership of the estate.

Sometimes the kings abrogate their former grants and make new grant in the

interest of the donees. An inscription<sup>19</sup> of Vasishthiputra Pulamavi shows the royal grant of a village of Samalipada in exchange for a village of Sudasana for the maintenance of Buddhist monks occupying a Nasik cave. Gautmiputra Satakarni had given to the ascetics one hundred nivartanas of royal land Govardhana in exchange for a field in the village of Kakhadi granted to them because neither the field was tilled nor the village was settled as indicated by another inscription.<sup>20</sup>

The majority of land grants from the Deccan are made by the kings or royal family members but endowment made by public are also prevalent. Vedsiri daughter in law of a house holder and bankers<sup>21</sup> offered the grant Lisipal<sup>22</sup> a merchant of Kalyana and Mugudasa<sup>23</sup> made gift for two plots of land in Saphau and Kanhahini respectively. The royal records show that the gift land was free from rent. Such information is not available for the Public endowment. It may be assumed that the donation for rent-free was not within the jurisdiction of the ordinary people. The Sersi grant<sup>24</sup> shows that a land of four nivartanas of a king's favorite physician (privavaidya) Nilkantha was donated by Ravi Varman to the temple of Mahadeva. The Mallar plate<sup>25</sup> shows the gift of the village for Mokkepika by Vatsa to two Brahmanas of Mahesvarswami and Rudraswami.

The gift was made rent free by the king Jayaraj. The villagers were instructed to pay due to the donees future kings were requested to protect the grant. It indicates the need of royal sanction prior to the creation of rent-free donations. Hence, Haridatta Sreshtin requested Kadamba Krishna Varman II to gift of village Kalanallura to a Brahmana without giving it himself.<sup>26</sup>

From Sirodi plate,<sup>27</sup> it appears if the king proclaims his sanction of a gift made by Prabhunaga Bhogikamataya for his salvation (Punya). Another inscription<sup>28</sup> shows that the king Bulunda gave a brahmadeya gift at the request of Amshadhanandi.

An officer or person occupying high position made a rent free holding.<sup>29</sup> The donated land of fiefs which royal officers of ancient India enjoyed for the time being<sup>30</sup> the land lord lost the rent of the land as long they were landlords. The aim of the land grants and rent free holdings was to get religious benefit, glory and success in this life and here after but it was not always the motive of endowment of land. The Arthashastra<sup>31</sup> informs that a king should grant brahmadeya lands free from taxes to the Brahmanas when he wants to settle villages either on new sites or

on old ruins. The objective to settle the brahmana in a new village was to develop a new settlement which would yield revenue in due course.

Skanda Purana<sup>32</sup> indicates the establishment of a brahmana settlement gives interesting data on the use of peaceful priests for reclamation. During medieval period land was donated for reclamation. In inscription form Kolar<sup>33</sup> says that land is granted to cut the jungle and form field, rice lands under and in the area of the tank which you construct dividing them into four parts in consideration of your having expended a lot of maney of your own and constructed the tank three parts we grant. For reclamation a Vakataka ruler donated a village to 800 Brahamana<sup>34</sup> and a Pallava prince donated four pieces of aranya (forest) land to a brahaman according to purva bhog maryada. The bandora plate<sup>35</sup> informs the grant of some forest land also four batches of workers(Preshyakula) for its reclamation.

## REFERENCE

1. *Epigraphia indica*, Vol. I, XXXIII, p. 53
2. *Ibid*, XXII, p. 174.
3. A.N. Bose, *Social and Rural Economy of Northern India*, Calacutta, 1967, p. 20.
4. *E I*, XXIV, p. 269.
5. *Ibid*, VIII, p 72.
6. *Ibid*, p. 78.
7. *EI XVII* p. 330, cf *Corresponding section in the Achyutapuram plates*, *EI*, III p.129.
8. *Brihaspati Smriti*, Ed. K. V. R. Aiyangar, Baroda, 1941, I. 7.
9. P. B. KANE, *History of Dharmashatra*, Poona, 1930, Vol. I, p. 458.
10. For the details of the five great sins, see *Manusmriti* (XI. 35) and the *Mahabharata Anushasanaparva*, 130. 38. *Brahmya-hatya surpanam steyam gurv-angana- gamahlmahanti patakanyahuh tatsamsargaschapi Pamchanam*.
11. *Indian Antiquary* Vol. X, p. 991.
12. *EI*, I, p. I 2.
13. D. C. Sircar, *indian Epigraphy*, Delhi 1966, p. 176.
14. Kane (*op. cit.*, p. 458) has cited a number of instances from the inscriptions and the *Rajatarangini* (4.639) showing that inspite of severe imprecations

land donated by former kings was sometime consilicted by their successors. Paratakam Sadiyan boasts that he performed many gift of devodana (land) and restored many brahmadeya grant (South Indian inscription, II, II, p. 461).

15. *Corpus inscriptionum Indicarum*, Vol. III, NO. 5.; EI, XV, p. 286.
16. *Ibid*, p, 236, IA, XII, p. 239.
17. The seven essential parts (*saptanga*) are sovereign (*svamin*), ally (*suhrit*) treasure (*kosha*), territory (*rashtra*), fortress (*durga*) and army (*bala*), see *kamandaka*, I. 16, Vishnu 3.33.; Cf also CII, II p.242n.
18. *Epigraphia Carnatica*, Vol, VIII p. 264.
19. Luder's List No. 1124.
20. EI, VIII, p. 73.
21. Luder's List No. 1073.
22. *Ibid* No. 1000.
23. *Ibid* No. 1130.
24. EI, XVI. p. 264.
25. *Ibid*, XXXIV, p. 28.
26. *Ibid* , VI, p. 16.
27. *Ibid* XXIV, p. 144.
28. *Ibid*, Vol, XV, p. 290.
29. Sircar, *creation of Rent-free Holding*, EI XXXIII, p. Idem, *Indian Epigraphy*, p. 114.
30. EI, XXXII, p. 50.
31. *Arthshastra*, Ed. R.P. Kangle, Bombay 1965 17.
32. *Skand Puran*, Gurumandal Series, No. XX Calcutta 1960, Second Vol, p. 77.
33. C. II, VI pp. 264-267= (*carpus Inscription Indicarum*)
34. I. A. XII, p, 339.
35. EI, XXXIII, p. 293.