
GAṄGA LANDGRANTS : THE DRAMATIS PERSONAE

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Inscriptions of the Gaṅgas , a dynasty which ruled from Karnataka in the early medieval period , are largely land grant charters. They give us ideas about the pattern of land ownership, measurement of land, classification of land *et cetera*. In this paper, we try to make an attempt to examine the social and economic status of different individuals figuring in the records . We find people who own the land , make the grants , receive the grants and others figuring prominently in the inscriptions. We can also notice the kind of privileges that were alienated during the transfer, as well as patterns of land tenure from these records.

OWNERSHIP OF LAND

In any agrarian economy, the issue of land ownership acquires special significance . Theoretically, three types are known to have functioned in pre-Turkish India. These include kings , community and individuals . In the Western Gaṅga dynasty, king was theoretically the lord of all the land in the state. This fact is reflected by the Western Gaṅga inscriptions . Therefore , in many inscriptions we read about gift of entire villages for religious and charitable purposes. For example Noṇamaṅgala plates of Koṅgaṇivarman¹, Mercara Plates of Avinīta², Uttanūr Plates of Durvinīta³, Bedirūr grant of Bhūvikrama, (Śaka 556)⁴, Aḡaḷi grant of Śrīpuruṣa (śaka 669) ⁵,

¹. No. 12, p. 40.

². No. 17, p. 61.

³. No. 21, p. 80.

⁴. No. 29, p. 111.

⁵. No. 42, p. 155.

Kādalūr grant of Mārasimha (śaka 884) ⁶ . This leads us to a very important conclusion that at least in theory the king was the supreme owner of the land.

But it is difficult to believe that there was no individual right over land because we have many inscriptions which refer to the donation of land by feudatories and others , with or without the consent of the king, especially in latter-half (8th century A.D. onwards) of the Western Gaṅga period. This can be supported by the Dēvalāpura inscription of Śrīpuruṣa⁷, Kuppepāḷya inscription of Śrīpuruṣa⁸, Rāmenahaḷli inscription of Śrīpuruṣa⁹, Peggūr inscription of Satyavākya Rācamalla Permmāṇaḍi (śaka 889)¹⁰ and Beḷachalavāḍi inscription of Nītimārgapermāḍi (śaka 935) .¹¹ Moreover, some inscriptions refer to individual owners more clearly. In the Meḷekōṭe Plates of Mādhavavarman II¹² we get the reference of 'land of clothiers', land of Vittamba merchant.

In the Basavanahaḷli inscription of Satyavākya-Permāṇaḍi¹³, some one called 'Ereyamma purchased two *khaṇḍugas* of Wet-land ... and (made) ... a grant to the Eṛyaṅgēśvara temple '. If land could be purchased and sold, there is every reason to believe that in the Western Gaṅga period , private ownership of land was also recognized. Hence , we get a complicated picture of land ownership pattern . If we generalize our reading of the Western Gaṅga inscriptions , we can safely say that there was an overlap of proprietary rights in the land . Interestingly, as we proceed to the medieval period , growing individual rights in the land can be delineated because we see more land being granted by feudal lords than the royal authority itself.¹⁴

⁶ . No. 139, p. 433.

⁷ . No. 56, p. 226.

⁸ . No. 68, p. 249.

⁹ . No. 73, p. 258

¹⁰ . No. 148, p. 465.

¹¹ . No. 154, p. 475.

¹² . No. 11, p. 37.

¹³ . No. 104, p. 321.

¹⁴ . See Nos. 52, 54, 55, 65, 68, 72, 103, 124, 143, etc.

There is no reference to ordinary peasant proprietors making or receiving land grants. Therefore, relations based on unequal distribution of land among the individuals emerge as a striking phenomenon.

Before we go into the discussion about the exact nature of the agrarian economy in the period of the Western Gaṅgas it will be helpful for us to analyse the nature of land grant charters. The palaeographical study of inscription is not intended here. We will mainly concentrate on donors, famous occasions, purposes and types of land grants. It will help us in our understanding of source material as well as the dynamics of the Western Gaṅga economy.

(A) DONORS

Our inscriptional studies suggest that assigning land grant on large scale was a common practice under the Western Gaṅgas. Institution of land grant which germinated in the Sātavāhana period started growing vigorously in subsequent period and became overwhelming and the most dominant institution in economy of the Western Gaṅgas.

Most of the land grant charters which have come down to us have been assigned by kings. Such grants are so numerous that it is difficult to list all of them here. Some of the significant grants can be mentioned here i.e., Kaṇḍasala grant of Mādhavarman¹⁵, Nandi Plates of Mādhava I¹⁶, Kudiḷiyam grant of Kṛṣṇavarman¹⁷, Haḷligere Plates of Śivamāra (śaka 635)¹⁸, Bāradūr grant of Śrīpuruṣa¹⁹, Biliyūru inscription of Satyavākya-Permāṇaḍi, (śaka 009)²⁰, Kūḍlūr Plates of Mārasimha (śaka 884)²¹ and Pērūr Plates of Simhavarman.²²

¹⁵. No. 2, p. 4.

¹⁶. No. 3, p. 7.

¹⁷. No. 6, p. 19.

¹⁸. No. 31, p. 120.

¹⁹. No. 39, p. 145.

²⁰. No. 106, p. 325.

²¹. No. 138, p. 411.

²². No. 155, p. 479.

Some inscriptions refer to the grants made by Princes such as Kuḷagāṇa Plates of Śivamāra²³, Koṭṭimba grant of Yuvarāja Mārasimha (śaka 721)²⁴, Bissanahalli inscription of Śrīpuruṣa²⁵ and Dēvalāpura inscription of Śrīpuruṣa.²⁶

We have also references of grants made by queens such as Śrīngēri Plates of Avinīta²⁷, Hosakōṭe Plates of Koṅgaṇyadhiraṇa²⁸, Salem Plates of Śrīpuruṣa (śaka 693)²⁹, Dēvarahalli Plates of Śrīpuruṣa (śaka 698)³⁰, Kūragallu inscription of Permmānadi³¹, Elkūtu inscription of Nītimārga Permānadi, (śaka 921)³² and Pērūr Plates of Simhavarman.³³ In most of these land grants 'King's consent' is also taken into account.

We have two peculiar charters issued by a concubine and a maid servant. These are the Hagoṭhāra inscription of Nītimārga Permānadi, (3936th Regnal day(?))³⁴ and Nagarle inscription of Permanaḍi (Mārasimha), (śaka 892).³⁵

Land grant were made by feudatories also. In fact, in the later period, grants are more commonly made by feudatories than by kings. In these grants, royal assent to the grant is also recorded uniformly. Kuḷagāṇa Plates of Śivamāra³⁶, Bissanahalli inscription of Śrīpuruṣa³⁷, Dimbāla inscription of Śrīpuruṣa³⁸, Kuppepālya inscription of Śrīpuruṣa³⁹, Gaṇiganūru

²³. No. 35, p. 135.

²⁴. No. 50, p. 206.

²⁵. No. 55, p. 224.

²⁶. No. 56, p. 226.

²⁷. No. 13, p. 44.

²⁸. No. 14, p. 48.

²⁹. No. 47, p. 175.

³⁰. No. 48, p. 182.

³¹. No. 123, p. 383.

³². No. 153, p. 473.

³³. No. 155, p. 479.

³⁴. No. 97, p. 308.

³⁵. No. 142, p. 453.

³⁶. No. 35, p. 135.

³⁷. No. 55, p. 224.

³⁸. No. 58, p. 230.

³⁹. No. 68, p. 249.

inscription of Satyavākya – Permmāṇḍi⁴⁰, Beḷachalavāḍi inscription of Nītimārga-Permāḍi,(śaka 935)⁴¹ are examples of such practice.

(B) OCCASION OF GRANTS

Most of the inscriptions, especially of the earlier period and some lengthy inscriptions of the later period provide us details of occasions on which the charters were issued.

Some grants were issued on the occasion of festivals, equinoxes and solar and lunar eclipses. Jāvaḷi Plates of Śrīpuruṣa (śaka 669)⁴² was issued on the occasion of Vriṣabha -rāśi – Saṅkrānti. Īśvarahaḷḷi Plates of Eṇeyapparasa⁴³ refer to the issuing occasion as Saṅkrānti. In the Kuñche inscription of Satyavākya-Permāḍi⁴⁴, we find that the grant was made on the occasion of Kumbha Saṅkrānti. The Āraṇi inscription of Satyavākya Naḷamba Kulāntaka⁴⁵, Kādalūr grant of Mārasimha (śaka 884)⁴⁶ Beḷachalavāḍi inscription of Nītimārga-Permāḍi (śaka 935)⁴⁷ and Kukknūr Plates of Mārasimha II (śaka 890)⁴⁸ were made on occasions of Viṣu and uttrāyaṇa Saṅkrāntis.

Three grants were made on the day of solar eclipse. These include the Kūdlūr Plates of Harivarma⁴⁹, Basavaṭṭi inscription of Śrīpuruṣa (Śaka 722)⁵⁰ and Perjjarāṅgi grant of Rājamalla I (śaka 741) .⁵¹ Hosūr Plates of Śrīpuruṣa (śaka 684)⁵², Koṭṭimba grant of Yuvarāja Mārasimha (śaka 721)⁵³, Gaṭṭavāḍi plates of Nītimārga -Eṇegaṅga (śaka 826)⁵⁴ and Āraṇi inscription of

⁴⁰.No. 129, p. 393.

⁴¹.No. 154, p. 475.

⁴².No. 43, p. 162.

⁴³.No. 98, p. 310.

⁴⁴.No. 103, p. 320.

⁴⁵.No. 143, p. 455.

⁴⁶.No. 139, p. 433.

⁴⁷.No. 154, p. 475.

⁴⁸.No. 159, p. 494.

⁴⁹.No. 4, p. 10.

⁵⁰.No. 51, p. 217.

⁵¹.No. 90, p. 282.

⁵².No. 45, p. 169.

⁵³.No. 50, p. 206.

⁵⁴.No. 119, p. 358.

Satyavākya Noḷamba Kulāntaka⁵⁵ refer to grants made on the occasion of lunar eclipse. The frequency of grant on these occasions is greater in the earlier period.

Coronation rituals of a new king were one of the most important occasions for issuing land grants. Ālahaḷi inscription of Būtuga⁵⁶ was issued on the occasion of the royal coronation. There is no reason to doubt that land grants which could have been issued on the occasion of festivals and small victories in war, were not issued at such an important occasion as the coronation ceremonies.

War and victories were also one of the most important occasions for making grants. We have lot of references where kings and feudatories granted land to those families whose member showed extraordinary courage, sacrificed themselves in wars and became heroes.⁵⁷ Such grants specially dominate latter half of the Western Gaṅga dynasty.

In the Gummāreḍḍipura Plates of Durvinīta⁵⁸, we find a reference to a grant of village on the occasion of his own birth anniversary. However, this is a solitary reference of its kind.

Some of the land grants were made without mentioning specific occasion. While some of them were given to brāhmaṇas, great majority of them were in favour of the Jain and Buddhist Caityas and basadis.

(C) PURPOSE

If we analyse the purpose of land grants it can be said that acquiring religious merit⁵⁹ was the most evident and immediate cause of land grants. This can be more specifically said about donations to brāhmaṇas.

⁵⁵.No. 143, p. 455.

⁵⁶.No. 137, p. 409.

⁵⁷.We find such references to heroes in numerous inscriptions like Nos. 28, 74, 78, 79, 81, 91, 95, 96, 99, 100, 101, 102, 123, 124, 128, 130, 151, etc.

⁵⁸.No.2 4, p. 94.

⁵⁹.Cf. Nos. 1, 2, 12, 13, 27 etc.

Grants issued in the name of temples were basically for their maintenance. Basavanahalli inscription of Satyavākya-Permāṇḍi⁶⁰ refers to a grant for white washing of the temple.

Grants made to caityas and basadis were mainly aimed at helping monks and ascetics. Maṅḡ plates of Mārasimha, (śaka 719)⁶¹ fall in this category.

Charter issued from victory camps⁶² (वजयस्कन्धावारे) are for two reasons. Sometimes it is a celebration of victory, specially if it was awarded to a brāhmaṇa . But , charter issued to a family of a war hero must be an encouragement and prize for the valour displayed on the battlefield. At the same time it must have been compensation and help to the grieved family.

Quite a few grants are made to construct water tanks . Mostly these are without occasion . Such as Gaṭṭavāḍi plates of Nītimārga -Eṛegaṅga (śaka 826)⁶³ and Kerehalli inscription of Permāṇḍi.⁶⁴

Interestingly many grants recommend portion of a land or some amount of land to the engraver⁶⁵ of the charter too and were ordered to be respected as brahmadēya or an agrahāra. This can be clearly seen in the following stipulation: “कूनाचार्यान्वयेन कोङ्क गणपेर्त्त रिणेदन्ता (न्तां) ब्रशासन ल खतं तस्मायैक खण्डुकावापमात्रत्तत्र सुश्रेत्रं ब्रह्मदेयक्रमेण दत्तम् ”. Here ,this grant can be taken as a sort of remuneration for the engraver. Specially if the engraver happened to be some sort of a craftsman.

Nature of land grants encompass one more vital aspect, i.e. the categorization of grant. The inscriptions of the Western Gaṅgas describe various grants differently and as: brahmdēya⁶⁶,

⁶⁰.No. 104, p. 321.

⁶¹. No. 49, p. 190.

⁶².See Nos. 5, 13, 42, 43, 48, etc.

⁶³.No. 119, p. 358.

⁶⁴.No. 125, p. 387.

⁶⁵. Nos. 21, 22, 24, 42, 43, 48, 49, 50, 74, 90, 93, 158, etc.

⁶⁶. In INS. No. 22 brahmadēya is a gift specially made to brāhmaṇas and, members of the taṭṭāra (gold smith) community, though dvijas, are not brāhmaṇas, what is meant by this puzzling statement may be that the grant

agrahāra, dēvabhōga⁶⁷, namasya, rudhiramānya⁶⁸, Kalnādu⁶⁹, Vālgacu, bittuvaṭa⁷⁰, Kalnātu, dēvasva, dhama-kshetra, baḷ-garccu, bāḷgaḷcu⁷¹, neṛe-śāsana⁷² etc.

(D) DONEES

An understanding of types of donees is as important as the categories of donors. Brāhmaṇas were the most important category of beneficiaries. Land grants extended to brāhmaṇas speak of high qualities, knowledge, super human powers and their performance of six fold duties. Brāhmaṇas mentioned in the land grants are said to be learned, to be pundits of four Vedas, upanisads, Vedānta or at least master of one of these knowledge. They are also described as masters of superhuman qualities because it is said that their blessing and curse has the power to become true. Therefore, land grants which, on the one hand contain long eulogies of donors, also eulogise donees on the other, especially if they are brāhmaṇas or religious men. In most cases their gotras and pravaras are also mentioned.

The other set of important donees were Jaina institutions. We have ample references of numerous land grants given to mūla-Saṃgha, Yavanika Saṃgha⁷³, caitya, jinālaya, basadi etc.

given to the engraver was governed by the same rules as in the case of a brahmaēya grant. See also INS. Nos. 42 and 48.

⁶⁷. In some cases (Ins. Nos. 22, 42, 48) the lands granted to the writers of the Western Gaṅga charters are compared to brahmadēya and in (Ins. No. 49) the present charter to dēvabhōga. This is in order to stress the inviolable nature of the grants made and to bring home the point that whoever flouts the grants made to the writers of the charters would have, in effect, incurred the same amount of sin as in the case of destroying gifts made to brāhmaṇas and the gods.

⁶⁸. Rudhira-mānya (Blood grant) Nettar (=blood) – Paṭṭi (gift of payment) is the Kannāḍa equivalent of Sanskrit raktamānya or rudhira-mānya and signifies any compensatory grant made to the dependents of the deceased hero.

⁶⁹. Kal-nāḍu is a Kannāḍa technical term, literally meaning 'setting up of the (memorial) stone' but in effect signifying the compensatory grant made to a hero or his dependents in appreciation of the valour displayed by him on the battlefield. This term also occurs as kal-naḍu, kal-nāṭu and Kal-natu.

⁷⁰. Though not stated in so many words in the records, it may be safely assumed that the biṭṭuvāṭa, which means any specified extent of land irrigated by the water from the tank in question, was granted for the maintenance of and repairs to the tank itself, as was the common practice in Southern Karnataka in those days.

⁷¹a. This term makes it clear that the record in question is a hero-stone inscription registering compensatory grant made to a warrior.

⁷²1b. The term neṛe-śāsana, by no means of frequent occurrence, appears to have been used here in the sense of a fullfledged grant i.e. a grant made without any reservation whatsoever. Neṛe-śāsana may, therefore, be taken as an equivalent expression for Sarva-mānya and sarva-namasya.

In the Melekōṭe Plates of Mādhavarman (II)⁷⁴ we find a reference of land grant donation to a Vihāra (Buddhist monasteries) also.

Temples are also one of the largest beneficiaries of this system. This fact is confirmed by the Māḍivāla inscription of Śrīpuruṣa⁷⁵ Haggoṭhāra inscription of Nītimārga Permānaḍi⁷⁶, Basavanahaḷli inscription of Satyavākya-Permānaḍi⁷⁷, Keregōḍi Raṅgāpura Plates of Rājamalla II and Būtuga⁷⁸, Gaṇiganūru inscription of Satyavākya-Permānaḍi⁷⁹ and Nagarle inscription of Satyavākya Permānaḍi.⁸⁰

We find that the soldiers and war heroes became the largest social group to obtain this favour in the latter half of the Western Gaṅga dynasty. They dominated even brāhmaṇas. These donees are mentioned in the Śivāra inscription of Śrīpuruṣa⁸⁰, Tollapaḷli inscription of Muttarasa⁸¹, Navalai inscription of Śivamāra II⁸², Māḍigere inscription of Śivamāra II⁸³, Araḷuguppe inscription of Rācamalla I⁸⁴, Bēgūr inscription of Eṇeyapparasa⁸⁵, Haradūr inscription of Eṇeyappa⁸⁶, Kārbail inscription of Nītimārga⁸⁷, Kaṭṭemanuganahaḷli inscription of Nītimārga-Permānaḍi⁸⁸, Maḍiviāḷa inscription of Nītimārga-Permānaḍi⁸⁹, Husukūru inscription of

⁷³72. Obviously the same as the Yāpanīya-Saṅgha which has "played an important role in the history of Jainism in South India by influencing the religious thought and moulding the monastic tradition of its teachers" – (P.B. Desai: Jainism in South India, Sholapur, 1957, pp. 163-164).

⁷⁴73. No. 11, p. 37.

⁷⁵74. No. 69, p. 251.

⁷⁶75.No. 97, p. 308.

⁷⁷76. No. 104, p. 321.

⁷⁸77.No. 113, p. 340.

⁷⁹78.No. 129, p. 393.

⁸⁰79.No. 133, p. 399.

⁸¹80.No.74, p.260.

81.No. 78, p. 265.

⁸²82.No. 79, p. 267.

⁸³83.No. 81, p. 269.

⁸⁴.No. 91, p. 293.

⁸⁵.No. 95, p. 303.

⁸⁶.No. 96, p. 306.

⁸⁷.No. 99, p. 312.

⁸⁸.No. 100, p. 314.

⁸⁹.No. 101, p. 316.

Rājamalla-Permānaḍi (śaka 792)⁹⁰, Kūragallu inscription of Permmānaḍi .⁹¹ Basavāpura inscription of Satyavākya-Permmānaḍi⁹², Chinakuruli inscription of Satyavākya-Permmānaḍi⁹³, Honnūru inscription of Permmānaḍi⁹⁴ and Bhairekoppa inscription of Satyavākya.⁹⁵

Some charters are not land grant charters but simple gifts of some objects. Gaṇiganūru inscription of Satyavākya-Permmānaḍi⁹⁶, Gaṭṭāvāḍi plates of Nītimārga -Eṛegaṅga,(śaka 826)⁹⁷, Kerehaḷli inscription of Permānaḍi⁹⁸, Taḷakāḍu inscription of Nītimārga, (śaka 857)⁹⁹, Ālahāḷli inscription of Būtuga¹⁰⁰ and Kārya inscription of Satyavākya-Permanāḍi (Mārasimha),(śaka 890)¹⁰¹ are references of charters issued for the construction of tanks and their dedication to the people. The Nangarle inscription of Permmānaḍi (Mārasimha), (śaka 892)¹⁰² is simply for the construction and protection of memory pillor. Significantly, the donor of this charter is a maid-servant (manevagati).¹⁰³

Interestingly , we have few charters which exempt merchants from toll dues and other taxes on some festive occasions. Īsvarahāḷli inscription of Eṛeyapparasa¹⁰⁴ and Kuñche inscription of Satyavākya-Permānaḍi¹⁰⁵ mention such occasions.

(E) PRIVILEGES OF DONEES

⁹⁰.No. 102, p. 318.

⁹¹.No. 123, p. 383.

⁹².No. 124, p. 385.

⁹³.No. 128, p. 392.

⁹⁴.No. 130, p. 395.

⁹⁵. No. 151, p. 471.

⁹⁶. No.1 10, p. 337.

⁹⁷. No. 119, p. 358.

⁹⁸. No. 125, p. 387.

⁹⁹. No. 134, p. 401.

¹⁰⁰.No. 137, p. 409.

¹⁰¹.No. 141, p. 451.

¹⁰².No. 142, p. 453.

¹⁰³. The technical term mane-vagati also occurs as mane-magati , mane-magattin, etc. in Kannaḍa inscriptions. Mane means (royal) house or house hold and magatti(n) from maga, meaning son, is to be taken in the sense of a servant, if applied to a male and maid-servant, if applied to a female.

¹⁰⁴.No. 98, p. 310.

¹⁰⁵.No. 103, p. 320.

It would be a fruitful exercise to compare the position of the Western Gaṅga territory with that of northern India in this respect. On the whole, the north Indian inscriptions are more explicit, both in case of the donation of full village/s or parts thereof. Occasionally, we are told in the Gaṅga inscription, such as the Agara¹⁰⁶ Basavaṭṭi¹⁰⁷ and Hunnuḍike¹⁰⁸ inscriptions of Śrīpuruṣa and the Īchāvāḍi fragmentary inscription^{109a} that instead of land, only the revenue accruing from the territory was granted. But one has to exert a little imagination to work out the privileges of different categories of donees.

The most characteristics feature of land grants made in the period of the Western Gaṅgas is the use of the term 'सर्वपरिहारयुक्त'.^{109b} We can assume by implication that donees were free to use all the resources beneath or above the ground, free to resell or re-gift, free to reorganize tax structure and administration. This term itself speaks about the non-intervention of royal authorities in the donated land. We find one important term 'nera-sāsana' which means 'a grant made without any reservation whatsoever'. Obviously it is an equivalent expression for Sarvamānya and Sarvanamasya. Therefore, we can safely say that land grants were made with wide range of privileges granted to the donees.

North Indian inscriptions clearly mention donees' right to avail the privilege of Viṣṭi or forced labour. The scope of Viṣṭi had expanded considerably between the first and fifth centuries of the Christian era. The Western Gaṅga inscriptions do not say anything clearly about the practice of forced labour in the contemporary period. The Agara inscription of Śrīpuruṣa¹¹⁰ says "a certain donor (name lost) exempted the 'Forty' of Amasu [...] from forced labour (?) and impressments of bullocks on festival days for one month and also exempted the 'Twenty' from impressments of bullocks and remitted tolls on head loads." It is interesting to note that K.V.

¹⁰⁶.No. 52, p. 219.

¹⁰⁷.No. 51, p. 217.

¹⁰⁸.No. 64, p. 238.

^{109a}.No. 150, p. 468.

^{109b}. K.V Ramesh has translated this term as 'free of all hindrances'(IWG , p.3) but it should be understood as 'alongwith all privileges.'

¹¹⁰.No. 52, p. 219.

Ramesh , the editor of the inscription is amazed to see the use of term forced labour in the inscription. He has some doubts about it. But if we carefully study this very small but important inscription, we can say that forced labour was not unknown in the Gaᅅga Period. It appears that the inscription talks about it in a very casual way, as if it is a normal thing to be talked about. Second, forced labour was, in this case, lifted or exempted just for one month on festival days, not for ever. It shows the deep rootedness of vested interests.

In north Indian land grant charters we find many references of donees' right to tax people and even to change the tax structure. As far as the Gaᅅga records are concerned , the Agara inscription of Śrīpuruᅣa¹¹¹ says that in the time of Śrīpuruᅣa in a territory where Maᅇlaveᅇūr was administrator , a certain donor (name lost) exempted tolls on head loads. Again the Doᅇᅇahomma inscription of Satyavākya-Permāᅇi, (śaka 899)¹¹² says that while the dharma-mahārājādhirāja Permāᅇi was ruling, donor 'twelve' of Piriya-Hoᅇma issued a charter that no one had the right to prescribe or collect taxes from the place in question. These inscriptions clearly suggest that donees had right to collect taxes and by implication they also had right to exempt these. Narasimharājapura plates of Śrīpuruᅣa¹¹³ mention donation of 'rent free plot of ground' called 'dharmakᅣetra' to a caityālaya. Another record, viz. Uttanūr Plates of Durvinīta^{114a} gives an indirect indication in which Durvinīta granted a village free of 'thirty-two types of privileges'^{114b} (द्वात्रिंशत्पारिहारसमन्वित-मुदकपूर्वन्दतः) . If this term in any way suggests economic and extra-economic obligation of people to the king , then we can assume that donees were free to enjoy these obligation for their own benefit.

¹¹¹.No. 52, p. 219.

¹¹².No. 147, p. 463.

¹¹³.No. 71, p. 253.

^{114a}.No. 21, p. 80.

^{114b}. K.V.Ramesh has translated this term as ' free of all hindrances ' (IWG,p.84) but it should be understood as 'alongwith all privileges '.

Few inscriptions mention specifically grant of garden and pasture, tree groups to donees. For example Narsāpur plates of Satyavākya-Permāṇḍi Rājamalla, (śaka 824)¹¹⁵ mentions the grant of garden, paddy field, coconut grove, etc. to a basadi.

TENURE OF GRANTS

We are not very clear about the tenure of land grant. The north Indian inscriptions very often talk about the perpetual grants in terms of "as long as the sun, moon and stars last".

Interestingly we have one inscription of Bhūvikrama, (śaka 556)¹¹⁶ which uses the term यावत् चन्द्रदिवाकरो. In the Chūkuṭṭūr Grant of Simhavarman¹¹⁷ we get another expression viz. षष्टिवर्षसहस्रा ण घोरे तम स वर्तते. Not a single inscription describes any definite period of tenure. We will probably have to presume that like their north Indian counterparts, perpetual grants were taken for granted and the donors did not think it necessary to stress the obvious. However, the land transactions such as these, which must have passed as legal documents, ought not to have allowed such a lapse even if it meant a reiteration of a stereotype.

Now we come to the discussion of what were the conditions on which grant was extended. As we have seen, the inscriptions' use of an umbrella term 'free of all hindrances'. So, conditions are not mentioned elaborately in any of the inscription but interestingly some of the inscriptions indicate in this direction. Nandi Plates of Mādhava I^{118 a} says 'it is stipulated that the donee^{118b} of the gift land was to till the soil on payment of one-sixth of the produce as tax.' Here, condition has been laid down but this exceptional inscription comes from very early period which again proves my point that in later period, all conditions were lifted and it were free of conditions.

¹¹⁵.No. 107, p. 327.

¹¹⁶.No. 29, p. 111.

¹¹⁷.No. 7, p. 23.

¹¹⁸a. No. 3, p. 7.

118b. K.V.Ramesh (IWG, p.9) refers to 'donor' but this does not make sense.

Agara inscription of Śrīpuruṣa¹¹⁹ and Hunnuḍike inscription of Śrīpuruṣa¹²⁰ narrate that only revenue, not land was granted. Aḡaḷi grant of Śrīpuruṣa (śaka 669)¹²¹ states that this land could be inherited by the donees' adopted son also (राजसमक्षं पुत्रीकृत्य उदकपूर्वन्दत्तः). Adoption might have been a very unusual institution. Therefore, it was necessary to make it clear for inheritance of the land grant. In the Narasimharājapura plates of Śrīpuruṣa¹²² we find that a rent free plot of land was donated. Narasimharājapura plates of Śivamāra¹²³ instructs the donee that produce should be handed over to a caitya.

The above examination has enabled us to see the mergence of a graded hierarchy in society on the basis of differential access to resources. This will help us to see how grants of land also resulted in the alienation of power and helped in the creation of a differentiated society with varying shades of power and control. It is hoped that such details will help in questioning or reinforcing formulations such as Indian feudalism, landlordism, etc.

REFERENCES

Note: All references to inscription numbers, unless stated otherwise, are from K.V Ramesh (ed.): *Inscriptions of the Western Gaṅgas*, ICHR, New Delhi and Agam Prakashan, Delhi, 1984.

¹¹⁹.No. 52, p. 219.

¹²⁰.No. 64, p. 238.

¹²¹.No. 42, p. 155.

¹²².No. 71, p. 253.

¹²³.No. 86, p. 276.