CHAPTER - 1

ROLE OF INAMS DURING PRE-COLONIAL PERIOD
The practice of granting Inams was an age old custom in South India. But this practiced assumed greater significance from the ninth century as is evident from the increase in the number of Inam grants. Various kinds of Inams were granted during the pre-colonial period as it was not only because of the custom of the rulers and other chiefs but also because of the political and social necessities that compelled them to admit and rely on the landed elites. Whoever succeeded to the throne in different kingdoms during the pre-colonial period, whether a strong ruler or a weak, a native or an intruder, he was bound to grant Inams to the various individuals or groups of importance in the political, social and economic structure, to incorporate them in the system of administration. As different rulers succeeded one after the other, the number of Inams also increased gradually and such lands occupied one-third part of the whole tenurial system in Madras Presidency by the middle of the nineteenth century. However, the increase in the number of Inams was seen as a result of the "anarchy" which followed the overthrow of the native dynasties and which was continued until the British assumed power in Southern India.

1 For the numerous grants made during the period of Pallavas refer C Minakshi, Administration and Social life under the Pallavas, Madras, 1938, Pp.94-111, 170-185 and 186-212. Also refer Epigraphical Indica and South Indian Inscriptions for the numerous grant of Inams from ninth century onwards.
2 Nicholas, B. Dirks, "Political Authority and Structural Change in Early South Indian History", in IESHR, 1976, Pp.125-158.
3 Burton Stein, "Privileged Land Holding : The Concept stretched to cover the Case", in R.E. Frykenberg ed., Land Tenure and Peasant in South Asia, New Delhi, 1977, p.68.
4 A Collection of Papers relating to Inam Settlement in Madras Presidency (CPRIS): Selections from the records of the Madras Government, New (Revenue)
assumption was that when the central rule collapsed, the Nattars, Kattubadidars, Palegars and others alienated the revenues to a considerable extent. The political system during the late pre-colonial period was conceived wrongly by the British. It was not because of the weakness of the central authority that the number of Inams increased, but the changing political structure that necessitated the incorporation of various groups which integrated the state. The eighteenth century should not be viewed as though regional elites usurped the power at the cost of the central authority. But instead it should be seen as a period when the decentralization of the political world was part of a vital expansion of new, often previously peripheral, political centers and initiatives. The various groups though relatively independent during the late medieval period when compared to the earlier period, they were functioning in their roles according to the responsibilities bestowed on them. This was made possible because of the patronage they received from their chiefs. The patronage system i.e. the grant of Inams played the role of integration of various groups in the state during the pre-colonial period rather than the role of degeneration of political power at the center. These various groups, from the village to the center which played a constructive role in the formation and sustenance of the state were provided with the Inams which were revenue-free or with nominal rent i.e. jodi. These various groups have formed the political structure of the pre-colonial period and thus formed a pyramidal structure of the state.

The importance of Inams would be evident from the relations that the

Series, No.1, Madras 1948, p.311.
grantees maintained with their grantors. These grantees, in different hierarchical positions, established their relations with their grantors not only in terms of political or tribute extracting or rent paying groups, but it went even beyond that. When the lesser chiefs offered their service to their higher chiefs, their services were recognized in the form of Inams. These Inams were not just lands to sustain the establishments of different grantees but inherently carried a value more than what generally was understood. Inams always included titles, emblems and honours along with the rights to enjoy usufruct from the land, and in some cases the privilege to rule on behalf of the grantor over a particular land or village or locality. Inams granted to the Palegars and the Kattubadidars and other lesser chiefs formed the last category mentioned above. Thus the Palegars and other chiefs received power to rule over the area assigned to them. In this way the sovereignty was shared between the king and other chiefs. However, this shared sovereignty was always limited, partial and sometimes specifically expressed. The titles and emblems gifted to the clients sometimes bore names similar to that of the titles and emblems of the overlords, symbolizing as though the persons who carry them were the rulers to be reigned over the area assigned to them but simultaneously as the subordinate of the king. This would be evident through the Inams granted for the various chiefs, the kin of royal family etc. in the pre-colonial South India.

Inams in the Political Structure:

The role of Inams during the ancient Hindu Kingdoms like that of Cholas highlight their significance. The administrative structure was on a hierarchical basis. The kingdom was divided into mandalams (provinces), which were eight or nine in total. Each mandalam was divided into valnadus or districts. These in turn were sub-divided into groups of villages, variously called Kurram, Nadu or Kottam. Occasionally a very large village would be administered as a single unit and this was called as taniyar. Chola officials participated in village affairs more as advisors and observers than as administrators. It indicates that there was less interference from the upper level of political structure, which was a noticeable feature of the Madras Presidency when compared to other parts of the sub-continent. The basic assumption in the type of village autonomy emerging at this period was that each village should be administered by the villagers themselves. To this purpose a village assembly, Sabha or Samithi was formed and authority was vested in this assembly.

The village assembly was responsible for collecting the assessment for the government. In many cases it was collected as a joint assessment on the entire village.

The existence of the assembly did not eliminate the need for an intermediary between the village and the king, other than the king's officer. There were different levels of intermediaries in the hierarchical structure that existed between the king and the village assembly. However, these intermediaries never held supreme control over the village. The degree of autonomy at the village level was such that shifting relations in the upper
levels of the administrative and political structure did not interfere with the routine life of the village. This was possible due to the considerable degree of economic and political self-sufficiency of the village and both social institutions and economic activity were organized within this framework. The intermediary was chiefly interested in collecting the revenue and passing on the king’s share. This degree of autonomy was recognized by Nilakanta Sastry but opined that the Nadu always obliged the central authority and thus it was the central power which exercised the overwhelming power on the regions. In contrast to the opinion expressed by Sastry, the division which enjoyed the greater autonomy was termed on the "segmentary" by Burton Stein and the state of Cholas as the "segmentary state". Whatever may be the opinions expressed by various authors, the fact was that the local areas exercised a considerable autonomy in the matters that decided their local affairs.

Such autonomy of the local assemblies has gradually increased after the decline of cholas during the thirteenth century, when Hoyasalas established their rule in the region held by the great Cholas. These rulers aligned themselves with the Tamil warriors from the Southern region (Pandyas) for their authority over the local chiefs. In other areas, Periya Nattars began to exercise forms of political power as never before.

The administrative structure had become more stratified and more closely connected with the pattern of the economy, a tendency which had begun to emerge in the Chola period. The state, during the Vijayanagar period, exercised control more through the local leaders. These local leaders or chiefs helped

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the state to collect the regular taxes from peripheral parts of the state. The organization of the state, at this time, depended on these chiefs. It was inevitable for the state to depend on them because these chiefs regularly met the military needs of the state. Nayakas or Palegars, as they were known, great or small warriors, played a constructive role in the tribute extraction and the expansion of the empire. As the holders of the Amaram, a military tenure, they were called as Amara nayakas. The king during the Vijayanagar period had to depend on these chiefs for the purpose of equipping himself with an efficient army and these chiefs fulfilled their role by providing the king with men and money. This was viewed as a military confederation of many chiefs. These chiefs (or Nayakas) were also the territorial magnates in their own right which was one of their dispersal role during the pre-colonial period.

Thus the kingdom received strong support from the Telugu and Karnataka chieftains of Adoni, Bankapura, Dharwar etc. These chiefs (Palegars) grew powerful under the central power that aligned them, and when its sway began to decline after the Battle of Tallikota, they later found their way into the interior of Madras Presidency and became more independent. Thus the growth of the Nayaka's rule at Ginji, Madura, Tanjavur etc., had strong connections with these Palegars. The importance of the area further increased during the seventeenth century shortly after the shifting of capital from Penugonda to Vellore in 1592 A.D.

The Palegars after entering the new lands aligned themselves with one or
the other royal factions with a view to achieving the best positions and
simultaneously, maintaining their independent status. The Nayakas assured
their position by the fortification of their territories, the maintenance of
strong core military formations under their direct control and the attraction
of the homage of lesser chiefs.

These intrusions into all parts of the Madras Presidency by the warriors
from within and outside it, has made them as the new intermediary leaders.
With them came Telugu Brahmans in Tamil region and Maratha Brahmans in circar
region. There were others who came along with them i.e., cultivators,
labourers and mercantile groups. These people did displace the settled one,
but utilized land which the latter had neglected. These people discouraged the
continued existence of ethnic territoriality to which they must forever be
outsiders. The success of these warriors and their followers in establishing
stable relationships with local Tamil and Telugu chiefs is the most persuasive
evidence that the earlier forms of ethnic organization had in fact decisively
weakened prior to the Vijayanagar period. Thus the descendants of the ancient
Nattars were compelled during the Vijayanagara times to reduce the scope of
their control over agrarian resources to quite atomized villages in the
localities of their previous dominance.

While the new centers of power in South India under the Nayakas and other
lesser chiefs weakened the central power of Vijayanagara State, it collaterally
stimulated the economic activity and development. They followed the economic

12 Burton Stein, "Integration of the Agrarian System of South India", in R.E.
Frykenberg ed. Land Control and Social Structure in Indian History, New Delhi,
pp.188-196.
policies of the Vijayanagara rulers. The formation of new market places and artisan quarters, the interest shown by the royal families, the involvement of temple, all encouraged the internal and external trade. At Ginji, care was taken to provide separate residences, market and work-quarters in which the right and left hand castes had jurisdictions. The Nayaka also took interest in the building of irrigation sources for the development of agriculture and also dug the canals for carrying water to the towns. The Nayakas of Madura built more canals and tanks in Tambraparni river valley which eventually led to the expansion of irrigation facilities in the southern part of the Madura region.

Thus it is evident that the numerous intrusions and the dependence of the kings, nayakas or even the lesser chiefs made the former to incorporate the latter groups in the state, having the society more heterogeneous. This process was continued from the time of Pallavas when the king incorporated the various chiefs belonging to different castes e.g., Maravar, Kallar and Paratavar. The South Indian armies during the pre-colonial period did not organize on the same kinship basis as the Rajput clans and lineages in North India.

The heterogeneity of the society is evident from other aspect also. As there were many intrusions into the various parts of Madras Presidency, the

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caste structure was not organized on hierarchical basis. The universal existence of caste was also not found in South India as there were many small divisive groups attached to local territories.

Before the assumption of administrative power by the British, the medieval polity in South was characterized by the development of many ruling families scattered in different areas. The political and economic institutions did experience a change from the Pallavas. From then onwards the royal gift became an autonomous arena for the proclamation and expression of authority. The Inam grants which was previously only one element of the basic definition of kings as sacrificers, now became the central constituent of sovereignty.

The more the Inams, honours and rights the patron made to his client, the more the client participated in the sovereignty of his patron and so the more the client represented the sovereign in his own right. The conferment of Inams while indicating the solidarity and hierarchy among the patrons and clients from ruler down to the village officials, it also creates two poles of relation, center and periphery, which appear as the two distinct groups reigning over their respective areas. This was made possible because of the transference of authority while conferring Inams on the clients.

The hold on authority sometimes led the client to become more powerful and thus acted on his own in the matters that were related to the areas which he held. These were not the signs of disloyalty. This did not stop the patrons to confer Inams on the clients. If the patron felt that the clients became more independent, there was no need to confer any more Inams or to resume the existing Inams, because, then the political system established through the

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17 Ibid., p.133
Inams could be disrupted. Sometimes the client claimed that he enhanced his power only to enhance the power of his patron. This enhancement of power by the client sometimes could lead to a conflict, as it happened in the case of Madurai during the reign of Achyutadeva Raya. The events could be summed up as:

In the first half of Sixteenth century, the tributary chiefs of Vijayanagara, Chandra Sekhar Pandyan of Madura and Vira Sekhara Chola of Tanjore engaged in a war. The latter conquered the former's territory and pushed him away from Madura. Chandra Sekhar Pandyan fled to Vijayanagar and asked Raya's help to regain his lost kingdom. The Raya promptly responded to the request of Pandyan ruler and sent Nagama Nayaka to chastise the refractory Chola. Nagama Nayaka subjugated the Tanjore ruler and other refractory chiefs. In the meantime, Pandyan ruler was given pension for his maintenance. However, for some time Nagama Nayaka did not transfer the power to the Pandyan ruler and the latter complained this to the ruler of Vijayanagara. When enquired, Nagama Nayaka replied stating that he wanted to regain the money spent on the war. The reply angered the Raya so much that he sent a force under Viswanatha Nayaka to defeat Nagama Nayaka. Viswanatha Nayaka, defeated Nagama Nayaka and brought him to Vijayanagara.

The client Nagama Nayaka's conduct need not be interpreted as the sign of disloyalty. Sometimes, when the client grew powerful, he is more likely to start acting on his own. Nagama Nayaka's contention was that the Pandyan ruler was not able to command the loyalty of refractory chiefs and hence there should be a powerful ruler to subjugate them. In this incident, the client acted on his own because he wanted to enhance the power of him as well as his overlord. In the process the client would, perhaps have gained independence and this

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could lead to the conflict as it did between the Raya of Vijayanagara and Nagama Nayaka. However, the patron, the Raya of Vijayanagara, ultimately, was able to establish his overall authority over the client, Nagama Nayaka. Nagama Nayaka was not punished but was liberated as a gift to his son, Viswanatha Nayaka, who defeated the father and brought to Vijayanagara kingdom. Here, the inam acted in different ways indicating the multidimensional relations it maintained.

Such situations kept the patrons always to follow the logic of political relations and thus increase their command over the symbolic and material capital of their rule which expressed in it continued overall authority on the clients, through the grants of inams. Inam as a mode of state craft compelled the king to engage in expansive and incorporative activity. The pre-colonial political system encouraged the kings to launch digvijaya, a tour of conquest, through which they established their personal rule over all chiefs and made them to pay a regular tribute to them. This was an easy process on which a king can depend on the revenue systems which sometimes gave least material support. Thus expansion, incorporation and war increased the capacity of the patron to grant inams to his clients.

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19 Digvijaya: Generally the supreme ruler did not hanker after territory so much as after having his superior prowess acknowledged. The description of digvijaya in Mahabharata indicate that there was no aggrandizement by acquiring fresh territory but all that was desired was to make the several kings submit and pay tribute or offer presents. P.V. Kane, History of Dharmasastras, Poona, 1973, Vol.III, p.68. The Kings in pre-colonial South India as elsewhere went on digvijaya to conquer more and more territory in order to grant them as inams, to their chiefs for the maintenance of their establishment.

20 R. Caldwell, A Political History and General History of the District of Tinnevelly in the Presidency of Madras from the earliest period to its cessation to the English Government in 1801 A.D., Madras, 1881.
Structure of Privilege Grants:

The structure of Inams during the pre-colonial period reflects the structure of political power and socio-cultural participation within the kingdom or empire and village institutions. The chief landholders during this period were the great Maravas, Kallars, Cervaikkarars, Vadugas, Reddys, Kammas, Kapus, Muslims (especially in Tondai mandalam) etc. They were collateral relations of the king who participated in expansion and sustenance of the state. Most of the chiefs were provided with Jagir grants by the king. These royal families kept the estates intact until they were settled by the British during the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries. The Jagirs were the large political grants, each containing a small court and a full set of Inam grants, including the "amaram lands". The Jagirs, in Madras Presidency consisted of group of villages which paid a nominal fixed rent to the king.

The next important class of people that formed the hierarchical structure of the privilege land holdings during the pre-colonial period were the Palegars or Zamindars and other big landholders. Generally the majority of this class of people belong to the same sub-caste which their patrons or chiefs of the region belonged. They were given large grants of land, titles, honours and emblems. They were served by the Amarakarars and Kattubadidars who were the armed retainers and accompanied to the battle along with their chiefs and took their honours and emblems to the royal court and temples when the occasions, such as coronation, festivals etc., demanded. Other lesser chiefs came from different sub-castes of Kallars, Maravars etc. Throughout the Madras Presidency Inams were also granted to other sub-castes, who were called in
diminutive form as cervais (in Pudukkottai), to keep watch over villages and localities not dominated by loyal kallars, Maravars, Vadugas etc.

These intermediaries were gifted with the grants of land in the villages. The Inam sometime consisted of waste land which was granted to the distinguished servants of the state, temple, monastery and mosque. The Inams of these hereditary intermediaries often consisted of the grant of the whole village itself (Darmilla or Mukhasa Inam).

In the village, the headman was given Inam in recognition of his local authority, who also used this authority as the representative of the state's power at large. These headmen, generally belonged to the dominant caste of their locality. The other dominant members of the village were called as the Mirassidars and were found in all the districts of Madras Presidency.21 These Mirassidars were later assimilated by the British in the process of formation of formal bureaucracy.22 The colonial government tried to keep these mirassidars as dependent as possible. Nevertheless, these Headmen are considered as powerful elites even during the twentieth century as the petty chiefs and Kattubadidars of the eighteenth century.

The mirassidars are elevated to the prestigious position because they were having a direct link with the king which was manifested through the

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21 Burton Stein, Vijayanagara, New Delhi, n.d. p.98.

Mirassidar: means the holder of mirassi right. Local landed elite, sometimes used interchangeably for the local ampalam (i.e. headman of caste, sub-caste, lineage, village etc), sometimes used specifically to designate a revenue agent appointed by the state. It originally signified the inheritance of right of land holding and often government service from the late 18th century.

responsibilities and honours bestowed on them. These privileges included the
Inam lands and specific emblems. They were the crucial component of the
authority of office as frequent disputes occurred over it than the economic
benefits accrued from the land. Individual mirassidar families could usurp
resources traditionally attached to shares, and then fight to keep them, either
locally or by the favour of some higher authority. Factions, in pre-colonial
South India, in villages were formed around families recognized as the leaders
in the community, who would have had many advantages in struggles occurring in
that area between individual family and collective community assets. The heads
of these families served as revenue contractors. 23

The village also consisted of payikaris (tenants) who were Ulkudi
(permanent) the original residents of the village and the Parakudi (temporary),
who did not belong to the village but migrated from other places. The other
village officials consisted of village servants and artisans, collectively
called as ayagars.

The village officers owned more or less large mirassi land and were also
allowed to have Inam land as well. They were entitled to enjoy certain rights
and privileges in the village, e.g. to receive some amount of produce from
peasants and village artisans. Their office and accompanying Inam land as well
as privileges were not only heritable but saleable and transferable with the
acknowledgement of state authorities and village assembly. The mirassidar
peasants were permanent residents of the village and paid the regular revenue
and miscellaneous cesses to the state on their mirassi land in which they held
a fairly complete proprietary right. Though it was not a frequent practice,

they could sell their own land. In the late medieval period village headmen were entitled to appropriate the waste land of their villages as their own land and village assembly also could dispose of waste land as Inam land through sale or gift to the willing peasants.

Parakudi payikaris, the temporary residents of the village, had left their native villages due to famines and devastations caused by wars etc. They would make an agreement with the village headmen to cultivate their land or waste land therein and pay a certain amount of rent. Apart from being the tenants of the mirassi they were also the tenants of Inam lands owned by village officers, temples, Mirassidars, headmen etc.

The ayagars collectively consisted, apart from headman, karnam and Talliar, carpenter, blacksmith, potter, shoemaker, barber etc. Their number varied according to the size of the village. In their respective capacities and according to the caste they represented, they served the villagers whenever required and were paid the remuneration at two harvests of the year which was usually in kind but occasionally in cash also. Besides this, they were entitled to certain shares of offerings dedicated to the temples, and to some other perquisites on special occasions. Moreover, many of them were given by the village a small plot of Inam land, which was cultivated by themselves. They were divided into permanent and temporary residents of the village. The permanent class were entitled to receive permanent remuneration recognized as mirassi or Inam; the later category received rewards so long as they worked in the village. The shares of grain heap of one-ninth was taken before its division between the king and the villagers. Village officials, artisans and servants were under services in many forms. Most of the village Inams
specified services both to the temple and village. These many inter-connections which linked the constituent parts of the village community together and thus linked the village to the state. A.M. Hocart viewed the service group in the village as the priesthood and a connecting link between mundane service and the ritual performance. According to him:

......the barber and the washermen like the drummers are not so much technicians as priest of low grade......potters sometimes officiate as priests in temples of village goddesses ....Carpenters make the temple car in return for grants of land.

The link between political and ritual communities was articulated by Hocart on the basis of services and lordship in the pre-modern period. The development of kingship acted as the base for the relationship between the village and the state, and also in organizing the complex of ritual and social services.

The services and goods exchanged in the village, in the pre-colonial period was interpreted as the Jajmani System. However these services and goods

24 Burton Stein, Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India, Delhi, 1985, p.424.
26 Louis Dumont held the view that Jajmani System existed, more or less, in all parts of India. According to him it was a system of closed economy of the Indian village in which essential goods and services were found or used to be found, either on the spot or in the immediate vicinity. Different castes, in this system, were bound together in the village. This was called as the "village community" by Marx in the economic sense of the phrase. The division of labour, in this system, was expressed through the hereditary personal relationships, and the payment was made in kind. To a large extent it was a question of the natural economy as opposed to monetary economy. Louis Dumont, Homo Hierarchicus, University of Chicago, Chicago, 1970, Pp.97-106. However, Jajmani according to Perlin, is a term hastily conceived, delegating a spurious unity to a variety of different kinds (even different systems) of legal, primordial, ceremonial and even ideological exchange, coexisting with other, more conventional and indisputably economic kind of activity. Frank Perlin, "The material and the Culture : An attempt to Transcend the present Impasse", in MAS, 1988, p.391. However, Washbrook wrote that the advancement in the

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were not only exchanged and utilized within the locality but it actually transcended the boundary of the locality or village. The different functions performed by various service groups was possible because of the incentive, social security and social insurance they enjoyed in the pre-colonial period. The Inam grants while acting as the incentive, social security and social insurance to these service groups, also made them to feel privileged as they were part of the king's extended authority. Inam grants and the attachment of the Inamars to their functional roles created new forms of integration, in the pre-colonial period, in which transition took place in the traditional role of various Inamars in the structure of privilege. This transition was contemporaneous with the development of relations with outside of their locality. The advancement in specialization of production which eventually led to the surplus production and the growth of trade, repudiate the theories of village self-sufficiency and the Jajmani System. The privileged structure (or the existence of Inams) was able to integrate and accommodate the changing social and economic conditions during the pre-colonial period.

specialization of production and the monetization of the 'labour class' and the numerous intrusion precluded the village self-sufficiency as stated by Moreland and Marx. It indicates that there was no such system existed in South India. D.A. Washbrook, "Progress and Problems : South Asian Economic and Social History c.1720-1860", in MAS, 1988, Pp.62-63. All the available evidence counter the idea of the existence of Jajmani System. The process of commercialization and monetization in the late pre-colonial period integrated very large numbers of urban and rural inhabitants into extensive relationships of production transcending localities and regions.

Mirassi and Inam, the system of hereditary properties, which are found in mature form in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries enabled the Palegars and other chiefs to emerge strong and form relatively free establishments i.e. Palems and other localities, when compared to the earlier periods. Both Mirassi (or Inam) and kinship include a good deal of ritual payment and ceremonial exchange which would conventionally be described as Jajmani, yet the existence of money-use and the advancement in the specialization of production affected the same system and the self-sufficiency of villages. See Frank Perlin, Op.Cit., p.400.

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The role of Religious Grants:

Among the different kinds of Inams, religious grants played a major role in the determination of British policy on Inams during the colonial period. Religious grants, even in the pre-colonial period, were central to the privileged structure and were active in the maintenance of relations between the king and the ritual domain. The shift from the king as the sacrificer to the king as the benefactor of Inam coincided with the beginning of temple building associated with Puranic deities, such as Vishnu and Shiva. Numerous grants to the temples, during the Pallava period marks it evident that there was a spurt in the religious grants made by the kings. An inscription of Nṛpatunga dated in his 18th year from Tiruvadi in South Arcot states that the Pandyan king Varaguna Maharaja was the donor to the temple situated in the heart of the Pallava kingdom. During the Chola period also, this type of royal generosity was the basis for a generous royal endowment of temples, as well as for the grants to the Brahmans i.e. Brahmadeyas. Temple building and the Inam grants for their sustenance has played a peculiar and powerful role in

28 The political system was described by the Hocart as the ritual system and was viewed both as homologous rather than evolutionally derivative. King was seen as the central actor or principal in the ritual domain. The principal of the ritual, if he was human, was the head of the community. In a small tribe of low degree we call him the headman, in more advanced or larger communities we call him the king. This shows that in pre-colonial South India, the leader of the state was seen as heading the ritual system and in the area of study he was known as the king and consequently as the ritual king. This term was frequently used in the cultural study of the pre-colonial South India. Rodney Needham ed., A.M. Hocart, Kings and Councilors: An Essay in the Comparative Autonomy of Human Society, Chicago, 1970, p.86.

shaping the relations between the secular as well as ritual domains during the Chola period also.

However, from about 1350 A.D., the south witnessed a serious decline of the Brahmadeya grants with the concomitant rise in the Inam grants to the temples. Religious grants, during Vijayanagara period, became the centers of agrarian development. Endowments of land and money to the temples were given to maintain ritual performances of religious institutions in perpetuity and they in turn became involved in schemes of productive agricultural development and to produce a stable flow of income. Simultaneously, these temple endowments were a major technique for the extension of royal control into new areas and transactions involving both material resources and temple honours permitted the absorption of new local constituencies into Vijayanagara rule.

The relationship of kings to temples cannot be understood without taking into account the variety of local sectarian groups and local dominant leaders who were responsible for the management of temples.

Different kinds of Religious Grants:

Temple endowments or Devadayams were the land grants provided without any revenue on them, to be paid to the king. Sarvamanyam, which also formed the religious grant, the land grants to Brahmans were totally exempted from paying

30 Burton Stein, Op.Cit., p.194 and also refer Appadurai, Worship and Conflict under Colonial Rule, p.64.
31 Ibid., p.64.
32 Ibid., p.65.
rent. These grants make evident the relations that existed between the king and the local village ritual and thus sustained the entire structure of ritual hierarchy. The grant may be of land, land revenue, or a fixed periodical allowance, the later was called tasdik or mohini. These grants made easy for the temples to organize the local ritual systems, facilitating the cultural coordination among the different castes or sub-castes, or social groups within the village and also deciding the ranking lineages (pollution-purity among the castes), thus sustaining the traditional social structure during the pre-colonial period. Services to the Temples were clearly indicated in the hierarchical level which coincides the village hierarchical structure.

Brahmadeya and Bhattavritti were the grants provided to the Brahmans for their personal benefits. There were some other Inam grants provided for specific purposes. Acharyapurusha, granted to the head priest of Temple, for performing the religious rites regularly. Adhyayanam was granted for chanting vedas. These grants were recorded by numerous epigraphical sources publicly proclaiming the importance i.e. punyam (merit) that accrued to the donor from such grants and also due to the centrality of the concept of Inams to the ideology of the dharmic kingship. The duty of the Indian king, according to the Shastras was to provide the economical source to the brahmans who chants mantras and render other ritual services for the protection and surety of his prosperity and that of his kingdom.  

33 There are many texts which make it a duty on the king’s part to show himself generous towards Brahmans. He obtains for himself, thereby, as Manu and Yajnavalkya say, an “imperishable treasure” (akshayanidhi) of merits which will compensate for the sins which he might be led to commit in the course of his government. A fortiori he must see to it that no Brahman suffers privation in his kingdom, and he must even aid from his personal purse any who are found to be in need. Robert Lingat, The Classical Law of India, New Delhi, 1973, p.218.
places of temporary residence and also the place where the pilgrims and Brahmins were provided food, was one more act of the dharmic king to get punyā and this was shared by all who participated in the protection and preservation of them. This was articulated in the copper plates issued while making Inam grants to the Brahmins.

The prevailing force of royal ideology encouraged for the construction of the numerous temples and brahmanic institutions in all over the South India. When calculated by Blair, Inam Commissioner, in the latter half of nineteenth century, Inams granted for religious purpose consisted of 14,58,081 acres with an hypothetical tax, quit-rent, potential of an amount of Rs. 24,22,467.\textsuperscript{34} The same number of acres of lands or even more should have been existed prior to the British under this category. The lands granted to these temples were among the best irrigated areas in different kingdoms during the pre-colonial period. They were watered by different irrigational sources, classified as high yielding lands and relatively secure from the alien attacks, during the time of wars because of the sacredness attached to them by the Hindu shastras. The role of devadana lands and other Inam grants should be analyzed within the larger context of rural development which occurred in Tamilnadu during and after the Vijayanagara period. A considerable part of the income accrued from these lands was invested in irrigation development and other allied activities. The temple was also provided loans to the ryots and others whenever there was need for the development of agriculture and also financed for carrying trade in the inter and intra regions. This kind of enterpreneurship was exhibited by the Temple and the management that supervised temple lands. The construction

\textsuperscript{34} CPRIS, p.319.
of more number of temples during the Vijayanagara period and after, makes it evident that there were large tracts of land grants (devadanas) which supported their (temple) establishments. However, there are many imperfections in the available data which shows the existence of more than 2000 temples, whose major structures may have been constructed during the period c.1300 A.D. to 1750 A.D. These temples were dedicated to a variety of deities viz., Siva, Vishnu, Murugan, Ganesa, Amman or goddesses and other deities. Excluding Tanjavur, for which no accurate data is collected, every taluk in modern Tamilnadu consisted of on average one or two temples, constructed in every century between fourteenth and eighteenth centuries. The distribution of temples in different regions was represented as shown in the following table.
### Table No. I-1. Showing Number of Temples Constructed in Tamil Nadu (except Tanjavur) During c.1300 – c.1750 A.D.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>No. of Temples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tondaimandalam (Chingleput and North Arcot districts)</td>
<td>406</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naduvit-nadu (South Arcot district)</td>
<td>332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pandyumandalum (comprising the districts of Madurai, Ramanathapuram, Tirunelveri and kanyathmari)</td>
<td>780</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kongumandalam (Coimbatore district)</td>
<td>517</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The successive rulers did not disrupt the Inams granted by their predecessors but, actually recognized them and tried to preserve them. In addition to that, the new rulers went on adding to the existing grants. This reflects the importance given to the Inam grants during the pre-colonial period. These religious grants were not provided merely to legitimize the kingship. They, in reality, underlined the universal outlook which gave a central importance to brahmanical learning, ritual importance and royal support for the worship of deities in the temples.  

Temple, in the pre-colonial period, was seen as the utilitarian as it was used to worship for the prosperity of the king and his kingdom. In other

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words, the prosperity of the people was derived through the worship in the temple. If the moral and spiritual prosperity was derived from the rituals of the temple, the material and economic welfare was derived from the constructions of tanks and canals which support the irrigation source. Both temple and irrigation were a part of the same social system. However, the difference was seen from the ability of producing material benefits to the people. As Hocart has succinctly put it:

If we call the reservoirs 'utilitarian' it is because we believe in their efficacy; we do not call temples so because we do not believe in their efficacy for crops.

Thus the importance of irrigation was recognized by the king and granted large tracts of lands for the upkeep of it.

Dasabandam Inams:

The Dasabandam Inams were the land grants made for the purposes of public utility. They were also known as Kattu-kodige or cheruvu manyams. As the word dasabandam (dasa=ten) itself suggest, it bears one-tenth of produce to be paid to the state.

Dasabandam Inams played a major role in the development of economy during the pre-colonial period. Prior to the British, the state development was based on the agrarian economy which depended on the irrigation sources. Since irrigation was a crucial component in agriculture, Inams at this point became

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37 Refer appendix, in CPRIS, p.344 & 347. Also refer Sundararaja Iyengar, Land Tenures in the Madras Presidency, Madras, 1933, Pp.143-144.
essential as they supported the irrigation works during the pre-colonial period.

The group of persons who developed and maintained the irrigation works were incorporated in the structure of privilege through the grant of Inams. They were brought under the extended authority of the king through the benefits of Inams.

In South, rich peasants have taken interest to dig wells in their locality for the supply of water to their fields. The chiefs of the area built tanks and kings built large dams. The local landowners or the village headmen also took keen interest in the development of irrigation in their localities. All these people were always ready to support the development of irrigation with their investments which resulted in the form of Inam grants.

Dasabandams were an institutionalized form of incentive or of hereditary remuneration to local leaders for the maintenance of water works. These Inams were divided into two types, depending on the extent of the work undertaken and the benefits accrued from it. They were (1) khanda Dasabandam, which consisted of the grant of land as they were generally given when there was a major irrigational work (because it needed a regular watch over the work); and (2) the Shalimat Dasabandam, consisting of an assignment of revenue. However the later category of Inams was also realized through a grant of Inam land and

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they were not easily identifiable by locality, since it appears as the old Inam grants. 42

There was another kind of Inam which form the Dasabandam category and was provided for the repair works to be carried on the irrigation sources. To prevent too much deposition of silt in the tanks and channels which impeded and choked the discharge of water, the repairs should be carried out regularly. Large endowments were made to carry the repair works and clean the tank and channels from the deposition of silts.

During the pre-colonial period kings contributed to the development of irrigation through the authority they conferred on the chiefs, after granting them Elipetty, tax-free lands during Chola period. The local chiefs thus accommodated were able to invest in the development of irrigation, as the region came under their authority. It became their responsibility to develop the region, because, the continuation of their hold over it and also the sustenance of their establishment depended on the continuous extraction of local revenue. This was possible when there would be an irrigation source which supply a regular flow of water for the good harvest to be raised. Thus the local chiefs took keen interest for the investment in irrigation development.

The growth of irrigation source indicates the parallel growth in the grants of Inams. The numerous grants during the Chola and Vijayanagara period shows the existence of large number of Dasabandam grants. 43

Inams as connecting links:

All the dynasties that ruled over the areas falling under the Madras Presidency during the pre-colonial period mostly depended on the military strength they possessed. This strength was in turn based on structure of alliances (affinity) and command, articulated by Inams, privileges and honours. This military strength, always played such an important role that without it no medieval Indian kingdom survived. The structure of the medieval state in the south was such that the king was dependent on his subordinates who occupied various hierarchical positions and who were the armed retainers. They were, hierarchically solidified in the structure of medieval kingdom through the privileges, connubial connections and other land grants rather than organized centrally or bureaucratically. It was Inam grant that sustained the complex relations in the kingdom i.e. relation of the king with the temple, relation of the king with the Palegars, petty chiefs, village headmen, village servants etc.

The total or partial exemption of tax on Inam land in the pre-colonial South India and the organization of different military and ritual hierarchies were always fluid and dynamic. Individuals could fight for the distinction in the social system where honour and rank were intimately connected and expressed in the political and ritual hierarchy. The receipt of extensive grants in the forms of Inams always provided, apart from other things, the security of life as there were uncertainties of a regular agricultural production enough for the

sustenance, because of the danger of failure of rains, external attacks etc. A large number of peasants lived in a system where risk and uncertainty were controlled and reduced by the grants of Inams, and where a hierarchical social and political system existed in which the constituents of this system were shared differentially and partially (shared sovereignty). The central idea of this privilege land grants - i.e. service - was offered by different constituent parts when entered in this (redistribution) system.\(^{46}\)

**Rights of Inamdar:**

It is evident that the Inam tenures existed extensively in the Madras Presidency during the pre-colonial period. Though the rights of holding of tenures in India differed with that of West, the grant of lands was a universal phenomenon during the medieval period. A great importance was attached to the land as there was little development in the industrial and related matters. However, the significance of the Inams can be understood through its existence in such a large scale, a phenomena peculiar to South India. Though a large number of grants of Inams were there, no clear definition of property was made as existed in the west. The institution of property though not clearly bestowed on any segments of the landed hierarchy, different group of persons were performing their duty according to the role ascribed or achieved by them. Land ownership prior to the British did not give the same meaning as it did after the introduction of permanent settlement in India. The colonial government was very much concerned with the rights of property and with whom it

was rested. The property rights in pre-colonial India did not rest in any single person. Marx stated that the king was the sole and only proprietor of all land in the East. Later he changed his opinion and stated that there existed the communal ownership of property than the individual member possessing it. More or less the same argument was put forth by K.P. Jayaswal and Iswar Dutt. According to them the property right never vested with the King. However, Robert Lingat differed with the above views and stated that the king regarded his kingdom as his property, although he (Lingat) admitted that powers other than the king could also exercise their power along with him (king) over the actual parcels of soils. The pre-colonial states did not concern much with the rights of property, but it had assumed significance during the British rule. It was the right of property which the British considered as the fundamental means for ordering the agrarian society, which facilitated the revenue collection on a systematic basis.

It was the revenue collection which occupied a central place in the agrarian history of India rather than the rights of property. The property during the pre-colonial period existed only in the context of social and political relations. It would be clear if one simplified the meaning of two terms used for property in Tamil - Panku and Kani - though appeared as different but interdependent in social and political relations. The word

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47 Marx's letter to Engels, June 2, 1853, quoted in Anil Sen Gupta, "Karl Marx and India", in Society and Change, April-June, 1989, p.3.
48 Ibid., p.4.
Panku meant a share in the property or revenue of the usufruct land. During the pre-colonial period, the share of land in the village was distributed among the mirassidars or among the family members or lineage groups and sometimes among the dominant caste or castes of an entire village. The shares of revenue or property were related to the shares in specific plots of land or to a large area and sometimes to the entire village, which would be divided among themselves and reallocated periodically. The word was also used to mean the shares in local temple festivals and in kinship units i.e., Pankalis (members of the same lineage). The term Kani means a heritable right in the land. It was also used to mean the right to fees or perquisites held by the village community or by the village officers. Kani was fundamentally a vertical term because entitlement to a share was usually granted by a patron. This patron could be either a king or a chief, and sometimes the leader of the dominant caste group. To have this entitlement or Kani, was to have Kaniatchi, which was related both to control over the land and to participation in the village lineage assembly and also with panku or right to a share in the local temple, which in turn entailed rights to receive honours and responsibilities to invest in the temple. The Kaniatchikars, who formed a corporate group were responsible for the collection and distribution of revenues of the village during the pre-colonial period. These corporate groups were hierarchically

placed within the larger structure of sub-caste or caste group and thus were able to spread their dominance beyond the village.\textsuperscript{57}

All the rights possessed by the Kaniatchikarar was not made possible unless there was a prior sanction and an active encouragement or participation by the king. The king, according to Robert Lingat, regarded his kingdom as his property, although it was agreed that other powers than his own could be exercised along with his over the actual parcels of soil.\textsuperscript{58} The term \textit{Kshatra} indicated that the king was the master of all land in his kingdom. It also implies a real right over the soil. Since he held power over the soil, the king also called as \textit{swamin}, a word which can be applied equally to a proprietor as to a husband or a chief, and which denotes an immediate power over a thing or over a person.\textsuperscript{59} The ultimate right of the king over the land never opposed the heritable entitlement (\textit{kani}) of the lands and also the shares (\textit{panku}) of the peasants. On the other, it complemented those rights and entitlement through the grants made by the king and other chiefs. In the case of Inam grants the king voluntarily alienated the right to hold the land as well as the revenue accruing from it. \textit{Sarvamanyam} lands were totally exempted from paying any tax while the other Inam grants paid \textit{Jodi} i.e, the quit-rent to the king. However, the concept of property during the pre-colonial period was misunderstood by the British when they arrived in India and assumed a different meaning. The debates during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were the result of such debates.

\textsuperscript{57} Nicholas Dirks, \textit{Op.Cit.}, p.310.


misunderstanding about the owner of the land, i.e. whether the king or the cultivator.

The principles of Kani and Panku applied by the people in Madras Presidency was helpful to build their domains in pre-colonial period. The principle of panku was applied to embrace whole irrigated villages, where Brahman and Vellala and other dominant families shared village assets under the terms of grants from the king. In the late period, the Maravars, Kallars, Reddys, Kammas, Vadugas and other chiefs known as Palegars, Zamindars and Jagirdars, have received the royal grants, which allotted the territories on the agricultural frontiers and designated them as Palem, Zamindari or Jagir, who in turn granted them to their subordinates. Thus the relationship of patron and client was built up in a hierarchical level from the top to down of the privilege structure. These Maravar, kallars, Reddys, Kapus and vadugas applied the principle of panku when they took away their share of revenue from the land and other subordinate members or the lower (a lineage) segments. The competition among the members produced sets of rights to land, granted by king and other chief and held by the dominant castes. As the dominant caste and the rights to land both became synonymous during pre-colonial period, it was expressed in proprietary status legitimized by the Kani and Panku principles.

Types of Inam land:

The position of segments and strata in the structure of privilege could be understood with a great deal of precision by the acreage of Inam land (or mirassi land) owned and controlled by the Inamdars who fall within these segments. Their hierarchical arrangement in the social structure by and large,
corresponded to the relative size of the Inam land they owned and controlled in the rural areas.

The social hierarchy of the South Indian rural areas was generally reflected in the hierarchy of land, whether mirassi or Inam. Types and plots of land got their specific names, occupy relative 'rank' and 'status' and vary in terms of their relative 'value'. As there were 'rich' and 'poor' classes in the social structure, there existed 'rich' and 'poor' lands even among the Inam lands. Their value varied according to the type of land i.e. Nunjah and Punjah, a major division among the lands. The former lands being supplied a regular flow of water and were in the advantageous position than the latter which depended on the rainfall. The dry tracts are found in Madras Presidency in the districts of Coimbatore, Salem, Kanyakumari, Tirunelvelly Cuddapah, Anatapur, Bellary, Kurnool, etc.

Most of the Wet lands (Nunjah) in the Madras Presidency were situated in the river valleys and at the places where the irrigational sources occurred. Tanjavur, Godavari, Krishna and Tambraparni valley in Tirunelveli district were the great irrigated areas in Tamilnadu. There was a heavy investment in irrigation by the kings, Palegars and other local elites. These wet lands produced a very substantial and reliable proportion of the local Inamdars' receipts and would appear to justify the investment made by them. On mirassi wet lands the assessment was twenty times higher than on the dry lands. The jodi (quit-rent) on Punjah lands was nominal and was collected in cash in accordance with the type of soil, which provided a surrogate measure of land productivity. The jodi collected was generally one-tenth of the assessment or even less than that, some Inam lands being exempted totally from the payment of revenue.
Agricultural production on Inam lands:

The main crop on the wet Inam lands was paddy which was the important foodgrain of South India. The other crops such as millets (Cholam, Ragi, Varagam etc.,) were also raised on a comparable area. Other crops raised were Chillis, oil-seeds (sesame, flax, groundnut), cotton, sugar, etc. However, the Palegar's lands were mostly dry and produced some garden crops, Palmyra, cotton, oil-seeds and pulses, which generated considerable cash income for villagers. Since the tribute payment was an essential factor between the Palegars and the king, the former collected their proportion of revenue from the peasants to pay the king their due (of tribute) in the form of ceremonial gift, ritual homage and above all military service instead of cash. Thus the Palegar's lands and other Inam lands were the crucial source of political as well as military base but not a lucrative source of revenue. Most of the sources of revenue to the state was drawn from lands other than Inam lands and other taxes and thus maintained the economy of the state in pre-colonial South India. In Tirunelveli, the tribute from Palegar's land was only 1/6 of the Nayaka state's revenue though they held 1/3 of the cultivated land. In many of the smaller states in Madras Presidency, during the pre-colonial period, between sixty to eighty percent of all cultivable land was given away to the

individuals and institutions under the category of Inam.  

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The agricultural production during the pre-colonial South India shows the essential feature of extensive yields on the available lands and also the character of labour saving. Those Inamdars, like the other land holders, who held the small plots of Inam lands, themselves worked on it. In fact, most of the families belonged to either the middle or the lower strata of the economic structure. They could not afford to engage the labour all the time on their lands. (The principle of labour saving was applied on both the type of lands, Nunjah and Punjab, as there was a shortage of the demand).

However, during the time of rising crops, even the marginal peasant had to use the additional labour and this was met generally by the untouchable castes like Pallis and paraihas.64 This agrestic labour as estimated at the beginning of nineteenth century was numbered between 10 to 15 per cent of the population and 17 to 25 per cent of the agriculture population.65 This labour apart from working on mirassi lands, also mainly engaged on the lands of dominant Inamdars, were removed because the dominant castes considered the physical labour as degrading and some agricultural operations as forbidden and thus avoided personal participation in the production process.

The productivity of land, whether mirassi or Inam, can be estimated through the inscriptions issued in tenth or fourteenth centuries. An inscription of 969 A.D. from Tiruchirapalli gave an account of the temple income which received in kind, at 120 kallams of paddy per vell on devadana lands.66 The other inscription of 1036 shows that the average tax on some land

65 Dharma Kumar, Land and Caste in South India, Delhi, 1992, Pp.52-55.
was about 112.5 kallams per vell. 67 Considering that the rate of tax in those times was hardly more than a quarter of the gross produce, the average output can be calculated as 400-450 kallam per vell. 68

67 Ibid., p.231.

**TABLE - 1.3**

**STATEMENT SHOWING THE AVERAGE GROSS PRODUCE IN DIFFERENT REGIONS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Districts</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Output in Kallams</th>
<th>Output in centuers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>South Arcot (on wet lands)</td>
<td>Rajendra Chola's inscription (12th century)</td>
<td>583.3</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Arcto (on dry lands)</td>
<td>1325 A.D. grant</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramnad (perhaps on wet lands)</td>
<td>1325 A.D. grant</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madura</td>
<td>1796</td>
<td>84.6</td>
<td>20.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanjore</td>
<td>1774</td>
<td>150.5</td>
<td>12.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanjore (low areas)</td>
<td>1801-02</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanjore (high areas)</td>
<td>1801-02</td>
<td>114.2</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chingleput</td>
<td>1788</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>29.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 velli = 6.6 acres = 2.64 hectares. 1 kallam was equivalent in most of the districts to 220.8 lb. i.e., 1 centner, and in Tanjore and South Arcot to 47.4 lb i.e., 21.5 k.g.


From the above table one can conclude that the system of agriculture in pre-colonial South India was highly productive. This system could be expanded
only up to a limit because of the shortage of labour and its high mobility. As
the type of land differed and as the irrigation source existed only in few
places, all the cultivable lands were not highly productive. However, it
assured a definite and rather a high productivity, if the system continued
without a further increase in the total population.

Non-agricultural production and the support of Inam lands:

The Inamdars were also involved in the production of non-agricultural
production during the pre-colonial period. The non-agricultural production
showed a great variety of forms of economic organization and of methods of
integration into the south Indian economy. A part of the production that was
related to agriculture was carried out by the agricultural families. The
middle and lower strata of economic structure who were enjoying the fruits of
agrarian economy of Inam as well as mirassi lands, were also involved in the
production of non-agricultural products. Except in the brahmanical families
who enjoyed the Bhattavarthi lands, the women and children of other castes
(particularly the lower class) were engaged in the cotton spinning work. Some
of the rich landed elites, during the pre-colonial period shifted their
interest to the production of cloth and engaged many workers (weavers) in the
process. The workers who actually involved in the process of production were
paid through the cash as well as the Inam grants. The handloom industry in
pre-colonial South India was so developed that the production was aimed both

69 S. Arasaratnam, "Weavers, Merchants and Company: The Handloom Industry in
for the consumption as well as for the market, thus adding an additional income to their (of weavers) sustenance, apart from the income from the Inam lands. Leather goods, agricultural implements etc. also formed part of the non-agricultural production which involved Kammalans (in Tamilnadu) or Panchalars (in Andhra) in the village and who were supported by the grant of Inams.

The different tenurial systems that existed during the pre-colonial period consisted of rights over land in one form or the other. But the ultimate right over the land was held by the king as it was the privilege of him, and since the two terms Swamin and Kshatra defined the king as the master of the territory over which he ruled. When the patron (king or other chiefs) granted Inams to the clients it transferred certain privileges which included the right to command groups of people as well as the right to receive the services from the clients in the hierarchical political and social system. In other words, Inams in pre-colonial South India, both as gift and entitlement, has acted as a basic ingredient in the determination of social and political relations of the state. Thus it became one of the principal means for the creation and maintenance of the local structure of privilege.

The structure of privilege was dominated at the local level by the Cervaikarars, Kattubadidars, Mukhasadars and other petty chiefs who were sub-ordinates to the Palegars and other chiefs. At the bottom of the structure of privilege, there were village vettiyans (servants of village headmen). The

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upper parts of the social structure would receive the grants from the chiefs and kings, but the lower part of the structure who served them never had the land grants or other privileges, received directly from the king, but through the dominant caste or the headmen. They were entitled only to the shares or rights to village resources, either as local adimai (Serfs) or as Parakudi (non-local, who came from outside the village) labourers only through the dominant members or Mirassidars of the village.

The adimai labourers who formed the lower part of the social structure with hereditary rights to service and subsistence were frequently classified as serfs overlooking their actual status and duties, who were known as untouchables (i.e. Pallar and Pariahs), and whose social units never constituted by the relations among themselves but in terms of their relations with the dominant group. They were also organized according to the lineages of the dominant caste for whom they rendered their service. Their only right was to service but not to land and other privileges. However, they were indirectly attached to the privilege through the dominant group to whom they were attached. Their labour did get importance only when they were scarce or when there was the conditions of drought and famine, otherwise, they remained in their regular services.

The Valiyars were the groups of people who also formed the lower part of the privilege structure in the pre-colonial phase and worked as agricultural labourers. They also performed their traditional callings of hunting and gathering in the forest by maintaining a precious balance between the two activities. The integration of Valiyars within the settled agrarian economy was partial but at the same time they never were looked down as the subordinate castes or untouchables. Some of these castes received Inams from the king for
beating the forest for the king’s hunt and guarding the royal forests. Sheep and cattle herders (Itaiyars and Konars), formed the third group in the lower part of the privilege structure who did not receive any Inam grants. They belonged to a nomadic group and their importance to a land based political economy was marginal, even though their role in bullocks trade and their provision of herds for soil fertilization played a significant role in agrarian life.

Among the different groups discussed above, only the adimai labour entitled to shares of village resources through the dominant members to whom they were attached. It is evident that all the groups of people at the lower part of the privilege structure were not directly related to the king as the entitlement to the resources were not granted directly by the king, but was settled at the locality by the dominant members. Nevertheless, all the groups of people, in the pre-colonial South India, participated in the structure of privilege in one form or the other.

Need for the Inam grant:

Though Inams formed as the base to the statecraft during the pre-colonial period, all the grants of Inams were not the same. They differed according to the nature of their grant. The religious grants were different from political grants. The former category were granted to fulfill the role of dharmic king by the ruler, to sustain the Brahmanical order (dharma) and to earn punya (merit) which eventually resulted in the prosperity of the kingdom. The political and other service grants followed a different logic. The chiefs and others who received this kind of Inam, have played a key role in village
rituals by extending the resources and sometimes granting Inams. The other grants made to the village officers, servants and artisans were aimed at the maintenance of the structure of village ritual. This indicates that the distinction was not very obvious among the different categories of Inams. Thus, during the pre-colonial period the distinction between the ritual and non-ritual was obscure. The same was followed by the colonial government and used the word Inam without fundamental difference. Whatever be the nature of the grants of Inams, political inferences were drawn from them. The privilege land holders, however variable, established the relation between themselves and the king when once the king granted them Inams. Thus ritual and politics were inextricably linked with one another. Ritual appears in all the segments of the political hierarchy. The different ritual forms changed the politics as it spreads widely in the structure of privilege.  

The king granted Inams to the grantees only to implicate them to his realm with the condition of service, which differed according to the nature of Inam grants. Since they were granted to different categories of people, it created a political hierarchy. The conditions of service and command were also made explicit with these entitlements. Hence there was a rank differentiation among the Inamdars which logically decided the variable proximity to the king and thus to the sovereignty itself.

The grant of Inams proved that it cannot be identified separately from the political and social context. The other factors such as consanguinity and affinity also influenced when the grant of Inams were made. These were the factors that operated when the king granted Inams during the pre-colonial

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period. They were granted to subdue the revolted chiefs or bandits to the Brahmans and to provide the village with carpenter or blacksmiths. As the kinds and nature of the Inam grants varied, the intentions and interests also equally differed. This process of granting of various Inams indicated the unique role it played in the pre-colonial South Indian history. It was, evidently, not just a land grant to be held, but, more so expressed in the form of socio-political relations and also the cultural meaning it inherently carried.

Thus Inams played a significant role in moulding the relations between the various segments of the kingdom and thereby integrating the state as one unit. It was the grant of rights to land and other honours viz., titles, emblems and privileges which symbolically linked individuals with the sovereignty of the king. This exchange of privileges was valued in terms of the concept of punya (moral) of the social universe in which the central importance was given to the development of relations with the king. Those who were nearer to the king have always enjoyed the power. The proximity to the king was decided through the relation that was maintained with him (king). Inam has played a significant role as it was one such base through which relationship with the king was maintained very closely, and the grant itself represent a part of the king, since the king represents the whole kingdom and the client was offered a part of it through the gift. The symbolic representation of the client, in the structure of privilege, also depended on the kind of the Inam he was granted.

The exchange of relationship did not base only on economic part, but it was extended to other social aspects such as rituals which eventually indicates that the relationship existed was not between the individual but between moral persons (persons who were meritorious, as the concept of punya was applied to

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aspects of the dharmic king that made him to grant Inams to integrate his kingdom. It was never proved as a negative factor in the rise of revenue to the state as there were lands to contribute the sufficient material resources for the maintenance of the state in pre-colonial phase. The political structure, during this period, always was based on the system that emphasized the control over men rather than the land and revenue. If the grant of Inam was the weakness of the king as stated by Stokes and Blair, the king would have been given them at the border areas of his kingdom where he has less control. But such was not the situation. Inams existed in all parts of the kingdom. They were equally at the center of the kingdom. For example the towns of North Arcot, Tanjore etc., were situated in the center of the medieval states, around which there were a number of Inams granted to various individuals or institutions. The king was collecting revenues from the center as well as from the peripheries. If the argument of Stokes was right, then the advantage would go to the king as he was relieved of the burden of bearing the transportation charges of the revenue collections from the peripheries. He would have simply given away the lands as Inams and would have concentrated on the center because it would be easy and economical for him to transfer the revenues from the center. Granting the Inams at the peripheral areas was actually to incorporate the new people into the political structure in which the king was the central

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authority. Inams at different levels i.e. from the center to the village level was the key element that knit the people into an obligation of service and was not a loss to the revenues, but signifying and sustaining the pre-colonial social order, simultaneously indicating the royal authority. Inams were an emanation of sovereignty in which the endowed institutions or individuals became actualized expressions of sovereignty.\footnote{78} The grants, while sustaining the various structures of political authority at different levels, gave political, social and economic liberties to the holders.

In the pre-colonial period, therefore, the Inam in Madras Presidency was clearly embedded in a complex set of process involving the king as well as the intermediaries, who chiefly framed the functions of it into a relatively complex tenurial structures. Although Inams coexisted with other tenurial grants, since many of the Inamadars held mirassi lands, they played a significant role while accommodating various segments into the political, social and economic structures. Consequently, they assumed greater importance since the holder of Inam was a privileged person. Such privileges were taken away by the British when they assumed the administrative charges of the region by 1801. The role of Inam had set to change, and this will be the subject matter for the following chapter.

\footnote{78} Nicholas Dirks, \textit{Op.Cit.}, p.145.