CHAPTER VI
ADMINISTRATION OF DARGAHS

The administration of a dargah is maintained generally by a chief mutawalli and other members. This practice in India and Tamil Nadu had existed from the very days of Muslim presence. In those days they were often state appointments associated with political favour and social prestige and the discretionary powers of their appointees were considerable. At present the dargahs not coming under the control of State Wakf Board are at liberty to select the appointment at their own comprising the members with the mutawalli otherwise called President through the election committee or hereditary process. The dargahs coming under the State Wakf Board select or elect the chief and other trustees but with the rules framed and followed by the Board. The trustees are responsible for the practical administration of the dargah by maintaining accounts, preserving the fabric of the shrine and its buildings, organizing and supervising the distribution of alms and food to the poor and pilgrims and managing the urs celebrations. There is a clear distinction between the role of the sajjada nashin the name given the chief of the dargah in North India and the mutawalli, though the person fulfilling each function may be one and the same; the former is empowered to deal with spiritual offices and responsibilities, while the latter supervises practical administrative and financial arrangements. The two offices may be combined in one person in Tamil Nadu dargahs also, but are more usually kept separate and the name, sajjada-nashin is not used anywhere in the dargahs of Tamil Nadu. The aim of this separation or non use of the term is to allow the holders of spiritual authority to remain free from worldly considerations in order to exercise that authority without prejudice. It is also
a means of preventing an odour of sanctity from forestalling any strict external supervision of administrative matters. It was also the work of trustees to use the rents and income from the dargah in a proper fashion. The administration is treated as a matter with which the shrine is concerned and the mutawallis are even removed when they are found to be guilty of misconduct or when it is felt that their work is unsatisfactory. Among the Muslims there has always been a sense that those associated with a dargah are more than just administrators displaying different degrees of avarice, if dishonest members or chief occupy the power in the dargahs, hence the separation of spiritual and temporal duties in the posts of sajjada nashin and mutawalli. Moreover, the spiritual value of the dargah is much greater as compared to other Islamic institutions. While the gap between precept and practice is often wide, the ethos of social responsibility on the part of office holders towards devotees exerts a powerful influence. The dargah's trust committee has to develop some characteristic features of administration. Its appeal transcended the boundaries of community and caste by attracting people drawn from different sectors of the society. It is the dargah which acts as a means of integrating local cultural systems into a larger one associated with the Muslim population. The dargah and its committee own and its administration controls considerable economic resources in the forms of property, land and each income. The shrine has further become a symbol of power both spiritual and secular; spiritual in the sense of association with God and fulfillment of earthly desires through acceptance of prayer and secular in the sense that economic wealth and social status could be transmitted to the individuals concerned with its administration.

Dargahs received grants of land to provide a maintenance work to the public. It is clear in most of dargahs that which ruler or individual made the
original award. Successive rulers did confirm conditional rights of the shrine to own the grants when disputes arose. After the firm establishment of the *dargahs* it was provided with the management of the shrine with its connected mosque, graveyard and the madrasa if any. It was also held that annual *urs* should be held and at which time food should be prepared together with alms to the needy and the regular prayers be offered for the souls of the dead. After the expenses are met, the remaining income passed to the descendants or *huqdars* and their families. The *dargah* conflict arising among the members regarding the continuity of maintenance, *dargah* expenses, holding of annual festival, looking after the administration or succession to the committee is revolved by the committee itself or by the State Wakf Board if controlled by it or by the court of law if the problems persist for long.

The office administrative functions are carried out by the mutawalli as head assisted by a secretary, treasurer and supervised by other members. There are some *dargahs* in Tamil Nadu where the administration is the work of a single man who takes the charge as head without committee members. The trust formed in some of the *dargahs* or the individual headship conducts the welfare and social service activities like free religious education to boys and girls and free marriage celebrations are too held in a few *dargahs.* In the month of *Ramzan*, a special dish, like *tabarruk*, is prepared and served to fasting visitors who come to stay for *tarawih* an additional nigh prayer during the month of *Ramzan* in the mosque attached to the *dargah*. The *dargah*’s administration towards the *urs* is very much significant since it has

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to take concrete steps to make the arrangements including accommodation for pilgrims' stay, maintenance of law and order and health amenities. In the *dargahs* where special *kanthuri* is arranged during the festival, the management committee prepares special pulao, a different tasty rice for the devotees. The making of decorated sandal pot to be taken in procession is the foremost duty of the *dargah* committee members.

As regards the grants of land, the award of property and confirmation of rights over its use meant the descendants of the *pir* had acquired considerable landholdings surrounding the shrine or in a neighbouring place. Apart from this, the *dargahs* have income out of its properties and from pilgrims' offerings made during the festivities and otherwise. Since the role played by *dargahs* in Tamil Nadu in bringing Hindus and Muslims closer has been quite important, the commoners belonging to the two major communities still worship at the graves and make offerings in cash or kind. The annual income from these offerings amounts to more than lakhs in popular *dargahs* and this amount is spent on the maintenance of the *dargah*, religious instruction to the children of lower strata of the Muslim community, the salaries of the staff working in the *dargahs* and daily and annual events.

The *dargah* administration needs some persons to fulfill the work of day to day events apart from the committee members. The *khadim* otherwise called *mujawir*, the attendant of the shrine to perform the daily rituals, *hafiz*, the reciter of the holy *Quran*, *roshnai-i- chiraghi*, the lighter at the shrine, *kalawant*, the musician to play music at the shrine and last grade attendars and scavengers in bigger *dargahs* are the regular workers. In
smaller shrines the muezzin, the person who calls for prayer in the mosque attached to the dargah acts as the khadim of the dargah also. During the annual festival of urs, special committees like urs celebration committee, committee for rituals at the shrine's building, etc are constituted. Members are nominated for the kanthuri feast in the dargahs where this feast is arranged to prepare and serve to the visitors and the poor. In bigger dargahs, temporary attendants are nominated to regulate the visitors to perform ceremonies inside and outside the main shrine. It was even during the lifetime of Sufi's, they well maintained their hospices with their disciples who frequented their places of stay. The so called "warrior Sufis" who were compelled to found royal domain had established an administrative set up.

The dargah administrative committee called Board of Trustees at the dargah of Nathar Wali, Tiruchirappalli was established under the court judgement in 1930. The Board was constituted by the court with three public trustees appointed by the court itself, one Pangali trustee selected by the huqdar and one hereditary trustee and this team of five trustees had to administer the shrine with one among them as chief Executive Trustee. The power of constituting the Board trustees was taken over by the State Wakf Board from 1982. The dargah with its new set up had the opportunity of celebrating the 1000th death anniversary of the saint in 1998. The dargah had made elaborate arrangements for this millennium function since it the first dargah in Tamil Nadu to celebrate the completion of 1000 years of this saint's death. It was the time of happiness in the shrine to receive the Guru Maha Sannithanam, the Madurai Adeenam on the first day of 1000th annual celebrations to release the audio cassette of the life history of Thable Alam Nathar Wali and also Thava Thiru Ponnambala Adigalar of Kunrakudi for
the inauguration of Islamic Music Festival a few days after the commencement of the celebrations. A session to stress communal harmony was held on the sixteenth day of the celebrations in the presence of Rev. Fr. Amudhan Adikal. The dargah and its administrative trustees were proud of welcoming Her Excellency, Miss Fathima Bi, the Governor of Tamil Nadu who released and received the first copy of the souvenir of 1000th year celebrities.

A distinctive characteristic of the Nathar Wali dargah is that the Quran believed to have been written by the saint himself in a paper material made of some synthetic resinous substance is kept in a glass box nearby the grave of the saint and it is a subject of appreciation that this copy of holy book has been preserved for long and the visitors are not allowed to touch it since the century old written material may wither away on being touched. To facilitate the administrative expenses of the dargah, some villages were granted to it by Mangammal the Queen of the Nayak dynasty of Madurai in the year 1701 whose dynastic rule had extended beyond Tiruchirappalli.241 The hereditary huqdar Shah Baba Syed Nasiruddin Kalandar who was in charge of the dargah at the time of the land grant had taken measures to maintain the income from the lands.242 At present, the dargah administration keeps the premises of the shrine neat and the mentally retarded patients are kept in a secluded area within the dargah's precincts. Most of the dargah's expenses are met with the collection in isfandi, the money box placed in front of the main shrine and large amount of income goes to the celebrations.

242 1000th year Urs Souvenir, "Hazrath Table Alam Badhusha", Board of Trustees, Tiruchirappalli, 1998.
and salaries of the employees. The Nathar Wali dargah administered by the Dakkani Muslims for centuries deserves appreciation from all sections of people.

The administrative committee at the dargah of Ervadi Syed Ibrahim is constituted by the huqdar. Nalla Ibrahim, the eighth direct descendant of the saint's family who left three sons began to look after the general administration of the shrine from the end of the eighteenth century. After his death, the sons' families were formed into three groups who continued to hold the responsibility of administering the shrine. One President, one Secretary and one Vice President along with twenty one members, seven from each family became the office bearers of the dargah's administrative committee. Other members of the three families were nominated as huqdar of the dargah. As per the record at the end of the year 2004 there are 287 huqdar who act as general body members of the committee and there is not allotment to female heirs to be huqdar. Though the committee's term is not fixed, the three office bearers alternatively change their post once in three years. Apart from them one executive officer has been appointed to take charge of day today administration from the year 2004 from the hands of one huqdar who had formerly held this position. During the month of urs, a committee of six persons is formed to make arrangements of the annual festival and after the festival is concluded the committee is dissolved. The dargah administration is conducting a nursery school at the Ervadi village for the children of general public and this school runs in the Nalla Ibrahim Mahal owned by the dargah. A madrasa to impart
religious education is also held for children in this mahal for two hours both in morning and evening.\textsuperscript{243}

The Ervadi \textit{dargah} is an asylum for the mentally retarded patients. Parents or relatives of those patients, males and females, bring them to the \textit{dargah} with the belief that they may be cured by the blessings of the saint. They prefer homes near the shrine for these patients to stay till they get cured. The patients are taken daily in the evening from their nearby homes to the \textit{dargah} to have look at the \textit{dargah} so that the mentally retarded can get a psychological moment with which their mental illness be cured. The patients with abnormal mental illness are chained and others are let free with a care. In the mental homes run by the private persons necessary care is not adequate and those patients cared by the relatives should necessarily be maintained and kept in good condition. There have been complaints as regards the mental homes and the conditions of the patients admitted in the asylums run by the private owners. One such incident happened in the year 2001 during which time 25 mental patients were charred to death in an asylum for which the exact cause of the fire incident is still not known. Requests were put forward either to close the asylums or punish the asylum owner and those who admitted the patients there. The National Human Rights Commission took up this issue seriously and sought a comprehensive report into this matter. It was the saddest day in the history of any \textit{dargah} in Tamil Nadu and was condoled and sadly condemned from all sections of the people not only in India but also all over the world since the mentally retarded were not mentally aware to know what happened to them. Though not the \textit{dargah} administration was responsible for this fire

\textsuperscript{243} Personal visit to the \textit{Dargah} at Ervadi on 30.12.2006.
tragedy for this happened in the mental asylum run by the private individual for income purpose, the dargah officials could advise these owners of the asylums or the caretakers of the patients to take care of them. The anniversary of this tragedy is remembered every year at the side of the fire accident. A prayer is conducted there on behalf of the dargah. Even public peace rallies or mournful functions are held to remember this tragedy. For instance, in the year 2004, the students of one college at Kilakkarai took out a peace rally from Ervadi village to the accident site. They carried placards stressing the need for giving importance to mentally challenged people. The dargah administrative officials too extend their co-operation to the mourning like this. In the same year, the mentally ill boys and girls of the rehabilitation centre, Shrishti, near Madurai were involved to mark the anniversary of the Ervadi fire tragedy. Derek Lee, a member of Parliament, Canada and Laura John, Vice Principal, Cambridge International University, Canada, participated in the condolence meeting.

The dargah administration is interfered by the government or the court when there arises a dispute as regards the conduct of the annual celebrations. When there arose a disputation regarding who had to conduct the urs in 2004, a retired judge was nominated as administrative officer to hold the anniversary celebrations at the dargah. The responsibility of the government nominated official will be there till the dispute among the dargah members is solved.

While the administrative set up immediately or many years after the death of the Sufis has been established with a committee in the dargah and even continues at present day, the khanqah where the Sufis stayed during
their lifetime was administered by the Sufi's themselves with the help of their disciples. Some Sufis who engaged themselves as warriors due to the circumstances which arose in the social and political arena behaved like ideal administrators. The Sufi saint Syed Ibrahim of Ervadi shrine was to be occupied as royal administrator for about twelve years. A copper coin which bears the name Sultan Syed Ibrahim on one side and Ibn Syed Ahmad which means son of Ahmad on other side is an evidence that the saint after becoming a royal administrator issued coins as a symbol of his rule to his subjects. The names inscribed in Arabic tell that even though Islam had already penetrated through the coastal areas of Tamil Nadu with the introduction of Arabic language for the purpose of religious worship, it was the first attempt to issue coins in Arabic language and that too by a king in Tamil Nadu. This credit of issue of coins goes to a Sufi who circumstantially turned a king and ruled a part of the then Pandya country. The Hijiri year 585 mentioned in the coin which corresponds 1190 A.D. confirms his period of rule and the figure of crescent with a star makes us believe that his royal duty was to abide the Islamic faith.

The administration of the dargahs was generally developed by the grants extended by the rulers during the lifetime or after the death of the Sufis. Local Kings, Hindu and Muslim, who became the favourites of the saints helped them by giving lands where the Sufis lived or the neighbouring lands in villages which would fetch income to the shrine. The shrine of Ervadi was granted on 1.11.1744 by Muthukumara Vijaya Ragunatha Sethupathi, the king of Sethupathi dynasty of Ramanathapuram. Though the land grant was made about five and half a century after the death of the Sufi, it brought about enormous development because the land
receiver Nalla Ibrahim, one of the descendants of the saint might begin to construct a small structure around the grave and the development continued with the land income. The nearby village Periya Mayakulam was made a gift and handed over to Nalla Ibrahim according to the copper plate available at the dargah. The total area of 6666 acres which included the land to cultivate fifty kalam of paddy and four kalam uncultivable land and also thirty two araikani forest land which had been under the control of Thiruvuthirakosai mangai temple was donated to the dargah. Some taxes inclusive of land tax, wood tax, grazing tax, etc which were paid to the government from these lands were ordered to be paid to the dargah. One third of income from saltpits was also ordered by the king to be paid to the Ervadi dargah. The terms used in praise of Haj pilgrimage and for the violation of this order to be punished as equal to the attempt to destruct a mosque at Makkah speak the volumes of goodwill shown by the king towards the Muslims and the prospects of the shrine.

The dargah's income mostly come from collections in money box which is placed outside the main door of the inner shrine. The donations form a part of the income to the dargah. The money box collection made by the visitors is spent for the conduct of the annual urs festival. Income from lands has gone less since many lands granted to the dargah by the Sethupathi king were taken over by the government according to Zamin Abolition Act and allotted to the poor landless farmers. At present nearly three acres of land surrounding the main shrine and nearly eight acres of land at Kattupalli where minor shrines related the main one are located are only owned by the dargah. The dargah administration has granted

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244 Copper Plate at the Dargah of Ervadi.
permission to about one hundred huqdarsto perform fatiha in main and
minor shrines. This Ervadi dargah is under the maintenance of the Lebbais.
The campus of the shrine is half cleaned and its environment has to be
improved and there is need for improvement in the area where women
visitors stay.245

The dargah of Sultan Ala ud din at Madurai is administered by the
committee which was created by the court under the Religious Endowment
Act of 1863 and three honorary members were appointed according to this
and they had to appoint a manager to look after the day to day administrative
affairs of the dargah and he was a paid servant. The Collector of Madurai
recognized the manager as land holder, the person responsible to be the
caretaker of the dargah properties. When the government found some
irregularities in the dargah administration and its expenditure, the manager
was empowered to carry out the directions of the committee and also
maintain accounts and registers. He was invested with powers to sue against
the defaulters and to be sued for misappropriation.246 When things were
going on, a judgement was delivered in 1961 to a particular group of three
members so as to settle a dispute and one among them acted as manager.
Another judgement of 1972 made the appointment of three new members.
According to Wakf Act of 1954, the committee members were recognized
by the District court as Muthawallis. According to the judgement of 1972, a
separate committee which functioned for the mosque affiliated to the
dargah was abolished and thereafter the dargah committee only had to

245 Interview with Muhammad Amir Hamza, President of the Ervadi Dargah on
246 Judgement of Civil Court, Madurai, 1961.
maintain both the *dargah* and mosque because from the inception of the *dargah* it has been keeping the Muslim community altogether along with the mosque at Goripalayam, Madurai.\(^{247}\) The mosque was the creation of the saint himself during his life time. Even now the mosque here is called 'dargah mosque' by the *zamath* Muslims.

From the year 1966 the *zamath* had taken the control of *dargah* authorities and even the manager. The *zamath* leaders expressed that the *dargah* members were to be the subordinates of the *zamath*. A new post of kaziar was created for Goripalayam *zamath* and it was his duty to conduct the marriages, attend the death ceremonies and to send death reports to municipality and he would not be obstructed by any person in the *zamath*. At present, this job of kaziar is not there at Goripalayam and the entire work of administration and announcement as regards *zamath* decisions is done by the committee.

The special feature of this *dargah* is that it permitted to hold public functions like marriages in a small building located within the *dargah* premises. The building called shathi mahal is let at low rent to facilitate the poor to conduct their family functions. The *dargah* has allotted a separate but a small building for women. A separate thatched shed meant for male patients measuring 50' x 15' collapsed in 1985 due to heavy rains and was rebuilt with a reduced measurement of 35' x 10'.

The Goripalayam shrine fetches income from different sources like rent, *isfandi* collection, *tastick* allowance, donations and others. Rent from

\(^{247}\) Judgement of Civil Court, Madurai, 1972.
different properties like shops, forms a considerable size of income to the shrine. Muruthkhana, the hall for relatives of patients gives another small size of income. Small thatched or tiled rooms at the back of the dargah building are accommodated with the insane persons free of rent. Tastick allowance is an allowance given by the government to the dargah in lieu of the lands in six villages owned by the dargah but taken over by the British Government under the Estates Abolition Act of 1863. It is a compensatory allowance for the loss of properties and it has been Rs.5,853/- and paisa 35 which is paid to the dargah annually and divided among the huqars.

Money collections in the boxes placed in front of the inner shrine fetch a considerable income to the dargah. People offer more money during Thursday and Friday and also during the festival days. The money box is opened periodically and counted and reserved for the expense of the shrine. Donations form a small source of income since this is offered by the well wishers and only during the urs festival. The other income to the dargah comes from the entry fee collected from only males who wish to enter the inner shrine where the graves of Sultan Ala ud din and Sultan Shamsudin are located. A fee of Rs.2/- only is collected and receipt is issued and the male visitors who enter this room offer special recitation of Quran and fatiha.

The income of the dargah is spent on various purposes. The income is divided into two accounts. One account namely Dargah proper, includes the tastick allowance sanctioned by the government, rent from shops and houses and for accommodation in murathkhana, if collected. Another account includes the collection in the money boxes, donations, and the

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entry fee to the inner shrine. Tastick allowance and the rent are made known to all deducting the general expenditure. Balance is divided into five shares. Two shares are allotted for the expenses of the dargah and mosque. Remaining three shares are distributed among the huqdars. This decision of dividing shares was made by the judgement of a civil court. Huqdars who had existed into three groups at the early period were all formed into one group for the convenience of distributing the tastick allowance. Later, they were again re-grouped into three as the early one. The members in the first and third groups still exist but no member exists in the second group. Two shares from the tastick allowance and rent along with other income like money boxes, donations and others in complete is meant for the expense of dargah festivities, mosque, salaries, tax on properties other than shrine, etc.

The income to the dargah has gone down since most of cultivable lands in the neighbouring villages were lost by the dargah after 1863. A pillar inscription standing at the left corridor of the inner shrine tells about the grant of lands to the saint himself and confirmed later. This black stone inscription inscribed on four sides in Tamil is well preserved by the dargah administrators. It is known from the facts found in it that six villages, Serkulli, Chokkikulam, Bibikulam, Kannanendal, Sirudur and Tiruppalai were sold to the saint, Ala ud din at the cost of 14,000 gold coins. When a matter of dispute came before the king, Virappa Naik, the king of Madurai,

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249 Annual Accounts Register, 1987-88 at the Dargah of Sultan Ala ud din, Goripalayam, Madurai.
250 Huqdar Register, 1961 at the Dargah of Sultan Ala ud din, Goripalayam, Madurai.
251 Huqdar Register, 1987 at the Dargah of Sultan Ala ud din, Goripalayam, Madurai.
during the sixteenth century, it was examined and confirmed by him that the lands were sold by the king, Kun Pandyan, the Pandya king of Madurai during the lifetime of the saint. The engraved stone was installed as a symbol of enquiry and confirmation of the lands on 11th of Thai, in the Tamil year Bhava, 1495 corresponding 1573 A.D. Virappa Naik's warning that any trespass in the lands would be considered a sin which was equal to the killing of a cow on the banks of the river Ganga was a gesture of harmony he showed to the Islamic community which is even today preserved in Goripalayam by all. From the term "Gori" used in the inscription it is presumed that the saint came from Ghori, a place in Afghanistan and this place began to be called Goripalayam after his title. The Naik king, Virappa used the terms "Delhi Orukol Sultan" to compare Sultan Ala ud din with the Sultan of Delhi and to call him a man of scepter and a man of justice. The inscription begins with the word 'Siva' to glorify the Hindu God and a few eulogistic words in favour of the king, Virappa have been written. It says that he was decorated by eight Lakshmis on the chest and names of his five genealogies have also been given. The figures of a vessel for sacred water, a lens to find distant object, a bow and arrow and a flag of Naik give royal significance to this inscription.²⁵²

Judgement of 1970

In the middle of the twentieth century, some arguments were raised over the ownership of the dargah's property and dargah administration made a request to the court to decide as to whom the properties were owned. The court took up the inscription as an evidence but decision of the British

²⁵² Tamil Inscription at the Dargah, Goripalayam, Madurai.
government to take over the properties of the dargah possessed in the six villages according to the Estates Abolition Act of 1863 was accepted by the court. Therefore the lands, except the properties taken over by this act were considered as properties of the dargah. The case of legality filed in 1950 came to an end and judgement delivered in 1970 confirmed the remaining properties and lands to the dargah.²⁵³ The report of Commissioner's Office, Coimbatore on the basis of title deed with T.D. No.1434 dated 23.12.1863 made the dargah and its properties independent. The report also said that the villages were sold by the then king for the purpose of religious faith and its harmony and not for the charitable purpose and therefore the existing lands, buildings and other immovable properties really belong to the dargah.²⁵³

Administration during the period of Sufi saints

The short period of rule of Sultan Ala ud din after becoming the king of Madurai witnessed an administration of goodwill and the coins issued by him tell us about the year he ruled, the circulations of coins among the subjects and the type of coinage during his period. From the name of the king 'Ala ud Dunya wa din' inscribed on the obverse of the coin, it is known that it was the usage of the Sultans of Madurai to print their names on the coins. On the reverse the Hijiri year of his rule has been printed. Shamsuddin, the sixth Sultan of Madurai Sultanate and whose grave is found next to Ala ud din was an able administrator and ruled with religious duty. From his inscriptions it is known that he asked his subjects to obey God, His messenger and the ruling Sultan and if one obeys the Sultan, he would obey the Almighty. One who deviates from obedience would suffer and one

²⁵³ Judgement of Civil Court, Madurai, 1970.
who abides by would have peace and safety and he would be victorious and successful.\textsuperscript{254} The coins issued by Shams ud din say that he himself calls him as "Meek Sultan" and the inscription is engraved with the name of Sultan as "Shams ud Dunya wa din Abu I Muzaffar Adil Shah as Sultan". From the coins it can be known that Arabic language was in use during the rule of Ala ud din and Shams ud din. The Arabic language, which was learnt by the Muslims for the purpose of religion only was made known for literary use and Arabic literature was introduced by the Sultans who had Arabic as their court language.\textsuperscript{255}

The \textit{dargah} at present day has been at the hands of Dakkini Muslims. The heirs of the Sufi saint in those days began to take care of the premises and the lands in the neighbouring villages. The present generation of the heirs administer the shrine with the rights of huqdarship. The environment of the shrine is good and as it is located on the bank of the river Vaigai, it is easily accessible to the pilgrims. A special feature at this shrine which has been in vogue from recent period is that free marriages are conducted for the poor Muslims every year. This marriage celebrations are held during the \textit{urs} festival. The shrine is conducting madrasa, a learning centre for Quranic knowledge for boys. Another feature of this shrine is that some centuries ago, the \textit{dargah} itself acted as a government office with great sense of responsibility as it had dedicated servants to collect several government taxes including those levied on irrigation, land and revenue and pay to the government treasury. Even registration and \textit{patta} transfers were done at this place. That is how a '\textit{thandalkarar}' drum beater from Hindu community

\textsuperscript{254} Persian Inscriptions at the \textit{Dargah}, Goripalayam, Madurai.

\textsuperscript{255} Arabic Coins available at the \textit{dargah}, Goripalayam, Madurai.
came into being and this job is continued by the generation of the earlier person. When it is seen that more number of people from other religious faiths visit the shrine which is ample proof of the divinity of this place as to what the administration is proud of its greatness.

The administrative body of the shrine of Sikandar at Tirupparankundram functions inside the mosque located at the small town. The shrine on the hilltop which does not come under the control of Tamil Nadu Wakf Board has a committee consisting of five trustees who are the huqdar of the shrine. Each trustee is entrusted with the responsibility of maintaining the dargah for one year. He has to go to the shrine on the hilltop daily or periodically according to his wish. If the trustee is old and unable to climb the hill, he could nominate one person as his representative to do this job. It is a very different characteristic which is not followed in any other dargah. Among the five trustees, the most senior member acts as Managing Trustee. The member trustee who is in-charge of the dargah for one year has to appoint one person called chiraghi whose term is also one year. He goes to dargah daily in the evening and to remain there during night and returns back in the early morning after the morning prayer but he may stay at the dargah for any number of days without coming down the hill if he feels difficult to climb. The duty of the chiraghi is to make lighting at the dargah premises and perform fatiha and remain at the dargah on the Thursday night compulsorily since many a number of visitors come to the shrine on that day.

The committee of dargah functions as the committee for the mosque which is also the zamath office. The zamath office holds an Arabic class for
children to learn Quranic study. As on this date, 10.3.2007 fifteen children are imparted religious knowledge. The way from bottom of the hill to the top upto the dargah is not provided with the steps and therefore the pilgrims have to reach the shrine with great difficulties. The dargah committee has sent a request with adequate plan to the government to lay steps and to make lighting arrangements on its way to top. Women heirs who had not been recognized as huqdar\s of the dargah had to be admitted recently when a woman heir of one of the trustees sought judicial intervention and got the court order in her favour.256

As regards the income of the dargah, its administrative committee had constructed eight shops in front of its mosque premises and its monthly rent forms a small part of dargah\s income. Money offering in the money boxes is too very limited since the dargah is located on the hilltop, the visitors to this shrine are not too many. The dargah is eligible to receive a tastick allowance of Rs.1567 annually in lieu of the lands in Thanakkankulam village taken over by the government. The total income is spent for the urs festival, maintenance of the dargah and mosque and for a daily wage of Rs.40 paid to the chiraghi. The shrine which stands as a symbol for the royal service rendered by Sikandar popularly called Ala ud din Sikandar Shah was a Sultan of the Madurai Sultanate. Being the last Sultan of this dynasty, his coins give us the dates 774 A.H. and 779 A.H. in two different coins from which it can be known that he was the ruler of Madurai during these two years corresponding 1373 and 1378 A.D. The copper made coins bear the term "The chosen of the Most Merciful" on the

256 Interview with S.Basha Khan, the Managing Trustee of the dargah, Tirupparankundram, Madurai on 13.01.2007.
obverse and his name "Sikandar Shah, the Sultan" on the reverse. The Sultan's spiritual service is not known but his fear of God is reflected with the spiritual words he used in his coins. While he served as a king of Madurai, his mausoleum serves for the purpose of visitors as a dargah.

The dargah administered by Dakkini Muslims is well maintained. The environment of the shrine is neatly kept. The rocky surroundings of the dargah is spiritually suited to the pilgrims and the visitors to the shrine will come in large number if the approach to the shrine is provided with steps and guarded by dargah men for the safe reach of the devotees to make this pilgrim centre more sacred.

The administrative process of the dargah of the saint Shahul Hameed and its land grants with income began with the death of foster son, Yusuf, of the saint whom he brought up as his own family successor. The maintenance and income of the shrine and the land grants administered by Yusuf as a single heir was divided into shares among his sons and daughters. The eldest son, Baba Bahruddin headed the family to share the income into eight. Allotting one share to his mother one share to his two sisters and the remaining six shares were divided among the six brothers by him. After a few years, Baba Bahruddin renounced the family life, went in search of spiritual attainment and was buried at Pallivasal village in Pudukkottai District. Hameedullah, the second son of Yusuf then took over the responsibility of this administration but followed the spiritual footsteps of this elder brother and was buried at Natham. The third son of Yusuf, who was Sultan Kabir by name began to administer the shrine's income with the

257 Coins available at the dargah of Tirupparankunram.
same eight shares as done earlier. In later years also eight families which enjoyed the eight shares multiplied with generations and the members who received the shares as heads of families shared with others or shareholders of the family got individually. At present, six hundred and forty shares exist in the dargah.  

The shrine's fame began to spread everywhere even when it was like an old stone structure. The king, Achutappa of Naik dynasty of Tanjavur suffering from prolonged malady sought the blessings of the saint Shahul Hameed at his shrine and accordingly relieved of the ailment and as a gesture of goodwill, the king granted the whole area of nearly thirty acres of land surrounding the present dargah. Historical evidences put that the saint died in 1570 or 1571 and the king Achutappa was uncrowned in 1580 and therefore the king must have visited the shrine of the saint but not during the lifetime of the saint. But however, it is absolutely believed that the area where the present shrine stands was the grant of the Naik king. The king Tukoji of Maratha dynasty of Tanjavur who ruled from 1729 to 1736 granted a small area of land on the western side of the shrine for the construction of the great and tallest minaret which was completed by his second successor, Pratab Singh. This biggest minaret along with the grant of a village Ilangadambanur near Tanjavur was a gift donated by him for the blessing of the saint by which the king's wife gave birth to a boy child whom he named Tulsi. Tulsi, the next king of the Marathas who visited the shrine was magnanimous in granting lands to meet out the expenses of

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259 Inscription at the *Dargah* Minaret, Nagore.
260 Copper Plate available at the *Dargah*, Nagore.
the dargah at a larger extent. This Maratha ruler from 1763 to 1787 donated fourteen villages namely Nedungattankudi, Vadakudi, Solanganallur, Kurumberi, Aliyur, Kadambarvazhkai, Nangudi, Sarungudi, Thirukannankudi, Puliyur, Vetrivazhkai, Pullur, Thethi and Melainagore for the maintenance of the shrine and its huqdar.261

The income of the dargah is based on the lands and the money box collection. Since it is the biggest dargah in Tamil Nadu, the collection in money boxes is unlimited. They are placed in front of the main shrine and other related shrines located in nearby places like Chilladi in the name of the saint Shahul Hameed. When the male visitors wish to enter the inner shrine, the gate keepers associated with the dargah insist to the maximum to contribute a sizeable amount at their hands. The visitors probably from long distant places, unaware of the necessity of collection and the income status of the dargah, contribute without hesitation. It is the only dargah in Tamil Nadu where such kind of "collection with demand" is done. A major portion of the shrine's income is spent on its administrative expenses, festival, allotment to share holders, etc and the remaining part is for disbursal of employees' salary and day to day events. The huqdar who have been permitted to perform fatiha within the shrine's precincts are entitled to enjoy the daily income they collect from the visitors who seek the help from them and voluntarily offer money for the performance of the ritual. It does not go to the total income of the dargah. Being the biggest dargah in Tamil Nadu it receives sizeable income and gifts as donations during the annual urs festivals.

261 Ibid., p.206.
The shrine with its vast area is maintained by its administration in good condition but it has to improve the surrounding of the shrine. Patients or others who tonsure outside the dargah do not keep the environment clean. They should be provided separate places for this purpose or the present accommodation allotted for tonsure is to be rearranged. The tonsured persons take bath in the pond located at the eastern side of the shrine but the dargah administration has the responsibility of cleaning the pond periodically. The first half portion of the pillared hall in front of the main shrine is occupied by the fatiha performers and the extensive portion is occupied by the males and females separately and this portion is left unclean by the visitors or the relatives of the patients. The dargah administration has permitted to run shops inside the shrine's premises which is not commonly seen in other dargahs. In this largely visited dargah, lodging facilities should be made available in large number for the pilgrims especially during the annual festival. Though not it is the duty of the shrine's administration it can take necessary steps for permanent construction or temporary arrangements since the available accommodation is not adequate during the crowded festivals. The shrine of a renowned saint which has attained popularity in Tamil Nadu and in some eastern countries has to retain its fame but with a good administration and the pilgrims' sacred thinking.

The mosque committee of Pallivasal village is the committee for the Kattu Bava dargah located adjacent with it. The small village with nearly half of the population with Muslims has this shrine amidst of it. The saint Baba Bahruddin, the grandson of the great saint Shahul Hameed of Nagore well established the shrine's administration of Nagore by allotting the shares
from the income of the **dargah** in the seventeenth century. But as he became a wanderer in search of Islamic faith he could not find a permanent abode and therefore the entire **dargah** set up at Pallivasal with also the mosque could have been made after his death or only the place of worship could have existed before the death of the saint. The mosque which took over the maintenance of the **dargah** after its foundation could have developed itself and the **dargah** with the grants of land from the local kings. It was during the period of Kilavan Sethupati, his son Rana Singha Devar who was the royal representative of Tirupattur region granted two villages with the cultivable lands, Adukkulam and Kanjavankulam located under Kalvasal region.\(^{262}\) Later, a stone structure was erected over the grave of the saint and a new mosque over the already existed one was also built. A small pond which was used by the saint and his disciples for oblation was re-shaped for permanent use by the king. All this was done by the Sethupati king as a symbol of social harmony that the saint did during his lifetime and the **dargah** later on.

Since a single committee looks after both the **dargah** and mosque it has been named Kattu Bava **dargah pallivasal** and it is mosque or even the **dargah** is the administrative office of the **zamath**. It can be said that **zamath** decisions are taken in the **dargah** with the participation of the committee members. The muezzin in the mosque is also the **khadim** of the **dargah** who carries out the rituals and he also works to maintain the accounts of both the **dargah** and the mosque.

A neatly maintained *dargah* premises is the pride of the Muslims in Pallivasal village. Nowhere in the precincts, unclean. Surrounding is found and it is because of the area upkeep by the shrine's administration and the visit of only a few pilgrims. A sizeable land portion allotted by the *dargah* for preparing dinners by the visitors is welcome. Arrangements made by the shrine for rental purpose can be used by the dinner providers. The pond located at the back side of the shrine is permitted by the authorities to serve the purpose of drinking to the neighbouring villagers. A special care is taken to protect the *shahid* parai on which the saint, Kattu Bava was killed by the thief. The shrine has its pride to be placed in high esteem both by the Muslims and the people of other faiths.²⁶³

The shrine of Peer Muhammad at Thuckalay which is run by the Anjuvannam Peer Muhammadiya Muslim Association stands there as a symbol for the religious and social services rendered by the poet saint. The association which has undertaken the administrative work of the shrine was established by the disciples who lived with the saint. It was also the coordination of the followers who came to follow his principles of humble life after his death for the foundation of this association. It takes maximum care to hold the events and festival without any unIslamic principles. Different administrative improvements like dargah reconstructive work, mosque reconstruction and book publication have been undertaken by the association committee. It has collected the poems of Peer Muhammad and has published it as a book for the use of public and scholars. The shrine has the helping hand from some Muslims living in Singapore and Gulf countries. The income from these sources is spent for the holding of the annual festival,

²⁶³ Personal visit to the *Dargah* at Pallivasal on 17.05.2007.
The dargah's daily maintenance and the maintenance of the mosque which is attached to the dargah. The shrine's surroundings including the rental houses for the patients are maintained with cleanliness. The shrine's serene location and neatly formed adjacent streets and above all the site for the pilgrim's fatiha inside the shrine create a saintly thinking in the minds of the visitors.

A vast area of land owned by the dargah at Kottaipattinam for the saint Rowther Sahib is conveniently located on the seashore to be visited by the pilgrims and administered by the authorities. The seventy two acre land includes the area where the shrine stands along with a stretch of vacant site and some portions in Kodikulam village. A separate site arrangement made for women visitors to stay and to perform ritual is welcome. The permission of the shrine to run small shops on the eastern coastal side is convenient to the visitors who stay at the dargah premises and during the yearly festival. The dargah depends upon mainly the collection in money box and a limited rent from the shops as its income and its expense is mainly done for the annual festival. The shrine administered by the Rowther Muslims has to be developed more to facilitate the pilgrims for their visit during the urs. Even though there lies a vast vacant site, it is not utilised for useful or administrative purposes. It can be utilised for the construction of a school for the public to be run by the dargah itself or a big madrasa may be built for imparting religious education. A place of serenity with coast is most suitable for a dargah and since it is located very near to the sea, calmness prevails around the shrine.²⁶⁴

²⁶⁴ Personal visit to the dargah at Kottaipattinam on 22.10.2006.
Another coastal *dargah* in the name of Naina Muhammad which exists at Pasipattinam is administered by a committee of the members of the *huqdars'* families. The present *dargah* committee frequently interacts with the *dargah* of Kottaipattinam since the saint here was the father of the saint of Pasipattinam. The *dargah* is running a madrasa for boys and girls below the age of seven and nearly fifty students are taking classes there. It is further running an Arabic college for girls only between 15 and 18 years of age. Since no separate building for this college exists it is run at the veranda of the *dargah* with the name Haleemathusathiya Women's Arabic College and it renders three years course in Arabic language. The shrine solely depends upon the money box collection for income and the main expense is met out for urs festival. Donations from philanthropists and pilgrims is very limited to this shrine. The *dargah* administratively developed after the Queen of Sivaganga, Velu Natchiar erected a stone structure over the grave which remains as the present inner shrine. The location where the shrine stands with its coastal environment and clean surroundings itself attracts the visitors and makes them remain for some time for peace. The shrine maintained by the *Rowther* Muslims is a boon to the local Muslim population which is the religious product due to the efforts of the saint.

The memorial at Pottalpudur for Abdul Qadir Jeelani is a gift and pride obtained by the Muslims in and around surroundings of this village. The present administration run by the *Dakkani* Muslims still preserve the

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265 Personal visit to the dargah at Pasipattinam on 21.01.2007.
name of the saint who is believed to have observed penance here for forty
days. The memorial is maintained with the income from the lands about
some acres donated by one Idbar Khan. This is the only larger income and
the money box collection forms a small part of it. The memorial does not
pay any tax to the government. The memorial administrators receive some
disciples from Ajmer and Nagore during the annual festival. A traveller to
Pottalpudur or a person passing through it does not leave without noticing
or visiting the memorial since, in such a way, it has attained fame in Tamil
Nadu next to the *dargah* of Nagore and the memorial authorities remember
the religious attempts taken by the saint in those days to spread the message
of Islamic faith.

The mausoleum at Sammattipuram, Madurai which stands for Yusuf
Khan is treated as a *dargah* for his treacherous death and the burial of the
trunk only here. The present administration of the shrine is carried on by
the *Dakkani* Muslims. The only income to the mausoleum, money box
collection fetches a smaller amount. The prayer hall attached with the
shrine is named "*dargah* mosque" but this has no separate *zamath* with
Muslim population. The *dargah* which does not come under the Wakf
Board control administers the mosque with a single committee. Even Yusuf
Khan was alive, he showed himself as a good administrator as the British
Governor of Madurai and Tirunelveli. The copper coin issued by him bore
the name 'khan' in Tamil. Though he was lovingly called Khan Sahib, the
term Sahib is not found on his coins. It may be of two reasons - for want of
space on the coin or the term Sahib could be very confused to other nawabs
also as regards the date of issue. The coins circular in shape weighing 2.28
grams with a diameter of 11.5 mm had a denomination of "*erandu kasu*" in
Tamil meaning two cash. Though his governorship lasted for nearly eight years it is known that the coins could have been in circulation for a very short period of time between January 1763 and August 1763.\textsuperscript{267} This is very rarity in administration of any kingdom or governorship but it was a proof to his good administration that he took steps to mint coins and circulated adequately among the public. The shrine with its very small area of a few cents of land is not enough for development and its only small hall in front of the grave is used by the visitors for \textit{fatiha} since the whole structure of the shrine is adjacent to the roadside not allowing them to stand by any side of the shrine. The administration has achieved from 2006 by demolishing the nineteenth century stone building and erecting a new concrete one without causing damage to the grave.\textsuperscript{268}

The administration of the shrine of Kunangudi Masthan at Royapuram, Chennai started from the first half of the nineteenth century by calling him as Gnanavallal - a man who has learnt and gives religious knowledge to others. The present administration is carried on jointly by three sisters who have no brothers to administer the shrine with male heir ship. The \textit{dargah} has no other income except the collections in money box which is not adequate to meet out the daily expenses and annual celebrations. The first female member \textit{huqdar} of the \textit{dargah} laments that scarcity of income does not permit to hold the \textit{urs} festival grandly and to feed the poor at the time of \textit{urs}. Though the shrine stands amidst of a thickly populated town which was once a place of thorns and bushes, it has

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\item \textsuperscript{268} Interview with Jani, the Managing Trustee of the Shrine of Yusuf Khan, Sammattipuram, Madurai on 11.03.2007.
\end{itemize}
to be developed since the premises of the shrine is not maintained in good environment and the reason for the lack of amenities is the non availability of fund which should be rectified by the present administrative members.\textsuperscript{269}

The shrine of Fasil Shah which is administered by the Dakkini Mohalla Takya Mosque \textit{Zamath} stands on the land purchased by two disciples of the saint, Chav mian and Nav Mian and subsequently it was carried out by their descendants. The shrine has the right of ownership in the properties at Adichanpudur, Shenbagaramanpudur, Vandanerikulam, Melakadu and Kottar including the site where the shrine stands.\textsuperscript{270} The \textit{dargah} premises which was once called as "Sothuparai" meaning a site with thatched shed to serve free meals has been renamed as \textit{Dakkani Mohalla} by one traditional member of a respectful generation family, M.Ebrahim Khan who took interest to save the traditional name of the \textit{dargah} and its \textit{zamath}.\textsuperscript{271} The income to the \textit{dargah} is very meagre since the visitors to the shrine are very few and their contribution is very less. The \textit{zamath} gets very small income from the lease of the coconut trees on the \textit{dargah} land. The legal dispute pending in the court had permitted the Tamil Nadu Wakf Board to take over the administration of the \textit{dargah} from the hands of the Dakkani Mohalla. The \textit{dargah} precincts with the vegetations though looking environmentally pleasant, is not adequately kept in cleanliness and if the present Wakf Committee takes steps for the good maintenance, it would be praiseworthy.

\textsuperscript{269} Interview with Mahmooda Beebi, the female \textit{Huqdar} of the shrine of Kunangudi Masthan, Royapuram on 28.09.2006.
\textsuperscript{270} Settlement Register for \textit{Dargah} of Fasil Shah at Shenbagaramanpudur, p.841.
\textsuperscript{271} Interview with M.Ebrahim Khan, a Committee Member of the Dakkini Mohallam, Kottar on 25.03.2006.
The shrine of female saint at Attankarai is administered by a family, Bijli family. Since this dargah is of a popular female Sufi, the administrators and visitors pay a very careful attention on the maintenance of the dargah premises. The governing committee is boastful of running a madrasa, Al Madrasul Fathima after the name of the saint. A neat environment surrounded by thick vegetation and a river running just near the shrine make this a pleasant one. The permission to women near the grave is a significant one since the saint being a female opted them to approach freely. It is very rare scene during the recitation of Quran and offering fatiha that both men and women stand or sit but separately surrounding the graves of Syed Ali Fathima and her husband.  

A small dargah building standing in the heart of the Vellore town is administered by the Dakkani Muslims who have been following the age old herbal treatment to the visiting pilgrims and patients. It may be the only dargah in Tamil Nadu where such a medical help is extended free of cost and thanks to the administrators to carry on the medical service done by the female Sufi, Syedani in those days are offered by the public. The word "dargah" or any other term which means this in local language is written in all dargahs in Tamil, Arabic or English but it is rarely seen that the word "shrine" written in English is found in the dargah of Syedani and not seen in any other dargah. Eventhough the shrine stands near on the heavy traffic main road, a calmness prevails since the location alone is free from public or traffic disturbances and the dargah committee under the presidentship of an old man is careful of not allowing or parking the vehicles nearby the dargah. The dargah would be developed if the committee takes steps to build a resting place with a building and a mosque for the male visitors since the present place of worship is not either spaciously adequate or neatly maintained. 

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272 Personal visit to the dargah at Attankarai on 01.05.2007.
273 Personal visit to the dargah at Vellore on 23.09.2007.