



UNDER HISTORICAL BACKGROUND ADMINISTRATION AND ECONOMIC MANAGEMENT IN SRINGERI SHARADA PEETA MONASTERY - A STUDY

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Abstract: The Sringeri monastery, located on the fertile left bank of the Tunga River, surrounded by the Western Ghats, has a glorious history of about 1200 years. Among the monasteries established in the four directions of the country by Sri Shankaracharya, Sri Sharada Peeta established in Sringeri in the south is famous as the Dakshinamnaya Peeta. This section explores the economic performance of the Sringeri Math, highlighting its role as a significant economic institution. Historical records reveal a well-structured administrative system that managed revenue collection and expenditure effectively, even during periods of financial fluctuation. The Math engaged in various economic activities, particularly land transactions, which included donations, purchases, sales, and inheritances. Land was often granted to individuals who served the monastery, with provisions for hereditary ownership and resale. The state played a role in transferring land to the Math and other institutions, both as full and partial grants, to support agriculture and rural development. Documents from the early 19th century illustrate the systematic nature of these transactions, showing how land was managed, cultivated, and its produce utilized for the Math's sustenance. Notably, the Math extended its economic outreach beyond the Brahmin community, providing support to artisans and common people, thereby fostering inclusive socio-economic development. These findings underscore the Math's dual role as a spiritual and economic nucleus in its region.

Keywords: Monastery, Jahagir, Administration, Gowdike, Coinage

The Sringeri monastery, located on the fertile left bank of the Tunga River, surrounded by the Western Ghats, has a glorious history of about 1200 years. During the Ramayana, it was the place of penance of Vibhandaka and his son Rishyashringa, and later Rishyashringa settled here, hence it is known as

Rishyashringagiri, Sringagiri, Sringapura or Sringeri. Among the monasteries established in the four directions of the country by Sri Shankaracharya, who advocated the Sanatana Adaita philosophy, for the continuous propagation and dissemination of the Upanishad principle established by him, the Sri Sharada Peetha established in Sringeri in the south is famous as the Dakshinamnaya Peetha. From the 8th century AD. Until 1336, Sringeri was only a religious center, giving importance to the study of Vedas and religious activities. After the establishment of Vijayanagara in 1336 AD, Sringeri was not just a religious center but became a large state due to the donations given by it. Later, due to this legacy continued by other royal families, it grew into a great state and remained a small state for a long time. After becoming a state, financial administration became an important part of the Srimata. From the beginning, the Jagadgurus there did not consider the wealth belonging to the Mata as their own property but formed a systematic administration to use it for the promotion and protection of the noble ideals of the Peetha. Such an institution, which is responsible for the all-round development of not only the people of the Mata and Jahagir, but also other public, is unique in the whole of India. Its nature, functions, available evidence such as inscriptions, files, etc., have allowed for many researches.

In the 17th century, the princely state lost control of its possessions. The reason for this was the political instability that prevailed at that time. After 1630 AD, Srirangaraya III had to face great danger from the Sultans of Bijapur and Golconda. Therefore, the state had to seek the protection of the Keladi Nayakas. Later, the Wodeyars of Mysore supported and contributed to the growth of the Sringeri Mata. It is a special fact that Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultans, who were in power during the period when there was no heir to the 6th Mysore throne, also gave donations to this state. Similarly, the fact that the Nizam of Hyderabad, the Adil Shahis of Bijapur, etc. also supported the Srimata, is a testimony to the fact that the Srimata has taken a secular stance and has grown as a symbol of religious harmony, and has retained its importance even today. Similarly, the Marathas, the provincial governors, and the British government (the company government) have provided complete protection to the Sringeri Gurus and provided all the facilities to the Mata through the documents.

Importance of the Study

Three main phases can be identified in the history of the Sringeri Mahasamsthan. The phase before it became a Mahasamsthan due to the donations and power given by the Vijayanagara kings, the phase when it grew and stabilized into a Mahasamsthan and the present phase after the abolition of Jahangir up to the present time. Of these, the Mahasamsthan phase is important from the point of view of economic study in the historical context. Most of the documents related to administration are available from this period. During this period, the Sringeri Mata, which continued as a spiritual center and Gurupeetha, also became a center of many activities. Along with spiritual work srinata also look towards economy, trade and other activities in his jahageer. In this regard, the main objective of this research is to study the economic activities of the Sringeri Mahasamsthan during this period. All the studies conducted on the Sringeri Mahasamsthan till now have been mainly historical.

Review of Literature

The literature include Mysore Gazetteer, Karnataka Gazetteer, Epigraphia Indica, Epigraphia Karnataka, Mysore Archaeological Reports, and Sri A. K. Shastri's 'Sringeri Itihasa', 'The Record of Sringeri Dharma

Sansthan', Volume-1 and Volume-2, 'A History of Sringeri', 'Sringeri Dharma Sansthan', 'Record of Sringeri Math relating to Keladi' 'Itihasa Darshan', 'Documents in Kannada', 'Index of Selected Files of Sringeri Math', etc., 'Sringeri Sri Mathiya Praktanalekhanumala Sanghar', Sri K. R. Venkataraman's 'The Phone of Transcendental Wisdom', 'Guru and Muslim Rulers' 'Sringeri Souvenir', S.K. Iyengar's 'An Ancient India', Desai's 'History of Karnataka',. Books like Shastri's 'Sringeri Sharada Peetha', Suryanath Kamath's 'A Concise History of Karnataka', Hasan Mahibal's 'History of Tipu Sultan' etc. have also been used.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the brief history of Sringeri Mahasamstana
2. To study the general administration and trade control of Sringeri monastery during Jahagir system
3. To study the economic administration of Sringeri samstanam during monastery
4. To study the currency system during monastery.

Research methodology

For the present study both primary data and secondary data has been used. Primary data has been collected from various scholars who performed in different administrative positions in Sringeri Mata. Regarding the financial management of the Sringeri Maha Sansthan, Famous scholars Sri Ganapathi Avadhanis, C.V. Giridhara Shastri, etc., who previously held various positions in the Mata, have been interviewed and their opinions have been used as appropriate oral sources.

Secondary data has been collected from various books, Mysore gezetier, Karnataka gezetier, Apigraphica Indica, and many other books and records related to sri mata Sringeri.

Scope and Limitations of the study

The legacy of the Sringeri Mata, which led to the founding of the Vijayanagara Empire, has its own unique history. Sri Vidyanaryas role in establishing the Vijayanagara empire in the south part of India is remarkable. The present study is limited to economic administration, trade, Currency system and Jahagir system in Sringeri Mahasamstanam during Jahagir. This study covers the administration system in Sringeri Mata before independence period only.

Economic Administration and Trade

The review of the records shows that the Shri Sharadha Mata was an economic Center. It can be seen that a systematic administration was created and revenues were collected from various sources in the areas within its jurisdiction and spent on various purposes. When this point is observed, it is observed that even when there were fluctuations in income and expenditure the administrative system that systematically balanced the financial situation by borrowing and lending using the available resources. Financial administration mainly includes land tenure-related transactions, trade, land donation, purchase and sale, inheritance, donation, allotment, half-grant etc.

Land transaction

The land transaction in the Dharma Samsthana is recorded in the files. Land transaction took place between the monastery and the people and between individuals. The system of giving land as donation to those who served the monastery in various ways was in force. Those who acquired land in this way had the right to inherit it for their sons and grandsons, or to sell it to others. As the state acquired more property, it gave it as a gift to individuals and to monasteries, temples and agraharas. In some cases, the lands acquired by the state were given as full grants and in other cases as half grants. The state encouraged agriculture and protected the interests of the farmers.¹

Land Donation

While describing the relationship of the royal families with Sringeri, it is learnt that land and villages were donated to the Mata from time to time. Some of these villages were considered as fully valid and others as half valid.² During the coronation ceremony of Narasimha Bharati, Harihara II donated the land of the lower villages of Sringeri. Hegde, Mada Hegde, Chikka Bommanna's son-in-law Madanna Chikka Hegde, Tammannan's son-in-law Bomma Deva, etc. are told to give 20 khandugas (40 kg per kanduga) of rice to Vishnu Bhatta every year for the worship of Vishweshwara Deva.³ In a land donation list dating back to 1600 A D it can be seen that Domanna Heggade, the son-in-law of Subbanna Heggade of Gangavabali, donated 1 row of areca tree and 20 khandugas (2.5 khanduga is equal to 1 acre of land) of land to the Sringeri Narasimha Bharathi for the religious activities conducted at the Sringeri Math. The gist of the land purchase deed given to Shankara Hebbar, son of Magalu Timmarasa Hebbar, dated 1624 AD by Manja Nayaka of Magala Apibili and his brother Bharamanagati is as follows.

In a document dated 1754 AD, the summary of the list of properties donated by Wangare Venkannacharya for the Karthika Deepotsav of Sringeri Sharada Amma is as follows: "Out of the four parts of the land under my control, which I have enjoyed in Wangare Agrahara, I have given 1 part to my son-in-law Subbaiah by gifting it to Sheshabhatta during the marriage ceremony of his granddaughter, and the remaining two parts of the land under my control are given in a gift paper in writing for the Karthika Deepotsav of Sringeri Sharada Amma"⁴ In another document dated 1816 AD, the order of the Vritti Swastha Bhoodana list of Abhinava Sachchidananda Bharati to the priest Lingabhatta is as follows: In relation to the previous land donation, the Vritti Swastha Bhoodana Patti of Sachchidananda Pura Agrahara was given to one of the Vritti Swastha Bhoodanas, which had been given as a land donation, and the Vritti Swastha Bhoodana list of Singappa's garden in Hulimane village, Kelanad Bagi, Bobi Nad, was given as a gift for the worship of Sri Sharadamba on Vijayadashami.

Donation to the priest

In a document dated 1847 AD, it is revealed that Subbamma the wife of Puttaiah of Guddan Kodagi, donated as gift (dhana) the land inherited from the ancestors, which was 600 trees of land in the forest area on the banks of

¹ A K Shastri, Srimata, Sringeri, 2009, Pp190,191

² A K Shastri, Srimata, Sringeri, 2009, Pp 202,203

³ A K Shastri, Srimata, Sringeri, 2009, Pp 203,204

⁴ A K Shastri, Srimata, Sringeri, 2009, p 208

Tungabhadra to the Jagadguru of the monastery. The petition was written by Devarabhata of Kalasada, in the presence of four people, Melukochchuvalli Puttanna, Bolur Kooja, Hindravalli Manja, and Tekkur Venkanna, and the writer was Devugodu Thamanna. In the land donation list dating back to 1600 AD, it can be seen that Domanna Heggade, the son-in-law of Subbanna Heggade of Mattur, donated 1 row of areca nut trees and 20 khandugas of land to the Sringeri Narasimha Bharatis for the religious activities held at the monastery.

Land donation to Agraharas

Land donation was made to Brahmins in Agraharas during the study of the Shastra. In a document dated 1810 AD, the summary of the Swastha Patta written by Sachidananda Bharathi to the people of Vidyaranyapura for the chariot festival and other divine services held in Vidyaranyapura Agrahara. Kaveri Venkatadri Shastri, a householder, was enjoying 12 varahs of land with a swastha yield and was enjoying it. Since he had no son, everyone agreed to donate it to be useful for the chariot festival and other divine services held in the village. This is the description of the Swastha Patta given by Sachidananda Bharathi to the Mahajanas of Vidyaranyapura to conduct these divine services as a part of the 12 varahs of land.

Sarvamanya- Ardhamanya Bhumi

Land exempt from all taxes was considered Sarvamanya Bhumi. Similarly, land exempted from half tax was considered Ardhamanya Bhumi. The gist of the letter issued by Chennammaji to Ahobalaraya in a document dated 1692 AD is that he was instructed not to collect tax from Sarvamanya villages in Mukkarnadu region⁵. The summary of the universal health patti given by Sachidananda Bharathi Mahaswamy to the Mahajanas of Sachidanandapura Agrahara in a document dated 1786 is as follows: "The Mahajanas of Sachidanandapura Agrahara of Sringeri, Sachidananda Bharathi Mahaswamy, left the land of 269 acres in the middle of the Gundagadde Timmana 15 Khanduga Praku as a gift to the Agrahara temple, and gave it to the Mahajanas of Sachidanandapura to keep and maintain the health patti in the name of Vidyashankar as a gift and to keep it Houses. The records show that the practice of renting out houses was still in existence. Thimmappa, son of Yallappa, rented out a house to a man named Kenchan. The rent for the house was one gadyana per year. Since the house was old, Kenchana promised to repair it and pay the rent due in the Pingala Samvatsara (1737 AD) in the following year.

Duty : In 1696 AD, Chennammaji informed Narasimha Bharathirma Swami in Binnavattala that as per the orders already issued to the tax collectors, an order has been issued not to levy duty on the daily food brought to the Sringeri Mata. When the Shree stayed in Srirangapatna in the middle of their journey to Rameshwaram, it is found that Abhinava Sachchidananda had told him that he would bear the expenses of the Bharti and the necessary equipment and also the stay. It is stated that the income of the village of Belavadi has been given to the tax collector to pay for the Sringeri pooja rituals of the Mata. The monastery had the power to punish and collect fines from the tenants if they did not pay the stipulated rent, and since the monastery had formulated such a strict

⁵ A.R.M.A.D, 1932, Vol.6,

rent, there was a considerable increase in the revenue coming to the monastery, which is a sign of the dominance of the monastery in power.

Gowdike : Gowda (Village Administrator) he was the head of the village. A person who wanted to become a Gowda had to first apply to the Sri Mata. The qualifications for becoming a Gowda were 1) He should be a good farmer 2) He should donate the land revenue to the Mata on time and 3) He should have kept track of the village's grain, etc.

Features of administration: Now, at the toll stations, the wagons of daily food grains coming to the Sringeri monastery were allowed to pass without any tax collection. There was no direct access to the Sringeri Jahagir. When the Gurus went on pilgrimage, the kings ensured that the monastery did not become a financial burden. They did not directly enter the financial affairs of the monastery with the land grant in their state, but only after obtaining the permission of the monastery. Even though the Maharaja of Mysore gave loans to the monastery, he could not exercise power over the monastery. It had the power to function in a completely independent way. There were no restrictions. Even though it was a religious state, it was the only state in this country that had functioned like a royal center, just like the powers that the kings had until now. No matter how prosperous it was financially, it was the only state in this country that managed to manage social or religious programs without any problems even when it was in trouble.

The monastery used to intervene in the financial affairs of the people like a government and take appropriate decisions. We can see the dominance of the monastery in terms of authority as the monastery had the power to punish and collect fines from the tenants if they did not pay the stipulated rent. Since the monastery had formulated such a strict rent, there was a significant increase in the revenue coming to the monastery.

Coinage: Although the Sringeri Dharma Samsthana grew independently, it was also prevalent in the state with different royal families of Karnataka from the Vijayanagara period. Gaddihana (also known as pagoda varahs), Kala, Pana, Haga, Chinna, Jatila, Kasu, etc. were the coins of Vijayanagara and they were made of gold, silver and copper metals. During the Keladi period, Varah (Gadyana) Honnu, Dharana, Hana, Mupaga, Addha, Haga, Bheli, Visa, Aravisa and Kasu were the coins of descending order. In the files, the term Varaha is also mentioned along with Gadyana in the Nirupa Binnavattala and the accounting records. In tax related documents, the word Gadyana is used instead of Varah⁶.

The coin below the Gadyana is Honnu. Honnu = half Varah(%). The coin below the Honnu Money = 1/10 part of Varah, 1/5 part of Money after Money Mupag, Mupag = $\frac{3}{4}$ part of Money, the coin below Mupag is Adh, Adh = $\frac{1}{2}$ part of Money. The coin below the Adh is Haga. Haga = $\frac{3}{4}$ part of Money. The coin below Haga is the bele, bele = $\frac{3}{4}$ part of Haga. Visa is a coin of lesser value than a bele, Visa = % part of Haga. Half of Visa is Aare Visa. Kasu is 16/1 part of Haga. During the British rule, Rupee, Ane, Paise was in use in the state.

Conclusion: The sringeri monastery has a glorious history during Vijayanagara empire. After Vijayanagara empire many rulers in Karnataka continued the support for the wellbeing of srimata. Due to the support of the

⁶ K.N Chatnus, Keladi polity Karnataka university Dharwad 1974, Pp196-198

rulers of Karnataka it has developed its own Jahagir and it able to maintain its own administration system. It has used its wealth for the wellbeing of the people in the region. Till today Sringeri Sharadha peeta is supporting all the catagories of people in the region without having any issues.

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