

Administrative Efficiency of Raja Serfoji II – A Study

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Abstract:

The objective of the study is to describe the Administrative Efficiency of Raja Serfoji – II. The study will be focussed on the Political Administration, Importance of Local Administratives System and Revenue Administration and also the quality of judiciary Administration.

Key Words: Raja Serfoji – II – Efficient administrator

Introduction:

The provincial territory of Raja Serfoji II was the present Thanjavur District. The natural boundaries of that region were the Coloroon in North, Coastal area in the east. The area of this region was from Devakottai which was situated in the coastal area to Bambaru in South; Pudukottai and Trichy were western boundaries of his kingdom. Ramnad which was the southern boundary of his kingdom. The administration at the time of Serfoji II can be described as a powerless enforced on the people through the signet of Serfoji II. The administration of the Thanjavur District was under the control of the District Collector appointed by the British Company. Even the appointment of the village officers in the villages which were suppose to be under the control of Serfoji II had to be intimated to the Collector of Thanjavur¹. The king had the power of dismissing the officers appointed by him. One of the maniyakkars was suspended from his palace. Harkars and Police were appointed to collect the paddy from the Mirasdar. The Kavalkars or the Thalaiyarries carried out police duties for the purpose, Thalaiyarries were appointed in 69 villages in Kumbakonam Taluk.²

The principality was divided into five Subhas (Districts) when the East India Company took charge of the collection of revenue from Serfoji II in 1798. The land was divided into nine taluks under the control of the principal collection of the District.³

Serfoji II had to transfer the entire charge of the country to Fort St.George. He signed a treaty in 1799 by which the Company agreed to pay to the Raja an annual allowance of one lakh Pagodas with 1/5 of net income of the country and to continue to pay 25,000 Pagodas to Amarsingh.⁴

Political Administration:

The Raja was the head of the state and he was assisted by a council consisting of ministers and learned men, Serfoji was content to leave full power in the hands of the council and he remained a nominal head. Many restrictions were imposed by the British Governor. He had intimate touch with the administration and having to depend to a large extent on his Ministers, the ruler lost direct contact with his people.⁵

The council of ministers which carried on the administration of the country was composed of the heads of the Chief Departments. The Chief Justice and the purohit of the royal house. Mantry was the most important member of the house. He was the advisor to the king. Office of the mantri came to the coupled with that of the dalavay who was the commander of the army. His function was to guarantee internal peace and uphold the nation's prestige in foreign relations through diplomatic dealings and military manoeuvres.

The Dewan or the pratnidhi who was next important official to the dalavay. The Samprati or the accountant are the other member of the council. The killedar was the other important official who controlled the Thanjavur fort and there were also spies known as amikars who were to supply information to the Raja.

Subedar

The kingdom of Thanjavur was ruled by Raja Serfoji. It was divided into five parts. Each part was called a Suba, which was under the control of Subedar. He was also incharge of the Army.

Pattakdar

A group of villages was called patak. Patak means a fertile area, every patak was in the charge of man official who was called Pattakdar.

Amidar

He was functioning as a revenue official and his post was equal to that of a District Collector.

Serasthar

He was the Treasury officer. All the revenues collected from different sources come under his control. He had the power to appoint Thasildar. He had his office in a section the Resdients office.

Thasildar

He was posted to collect revenues in a Taluk.

Havildar

He was the Army officer.

Kothaval

He was equal to the present head constable. Since these people are called for Kothavals. If may be understood that they were guarding the fort and the palace.

- He could fine Government servant who was found guilty to the extend of fees + 5 days salary.
- He could receive a statement from a thief and send him the Magistrate Trial.
- He could transfer Policemen, who were called on sound reason, which he must state.
- He worked in colloboration with the Mahaldar for maintaining the cities and towns in the kingdom neat and clean.
- Those who violated the cleanliness rules were booked by kothaval and send for the punishment.
- He should give warning to the people against giving any scope from theft.
- He should ban all kinds of compelling in the kingdom.
- The sanitary servants and officials should be supervised by the kothaval. The sanitary vehicles were under his control.

Karbari

He was the head of the body guard of the King.

Mahal Mathiyasrhar

He was appointed to every Mahal and controlled its activities.

Kamaviladar

He was a Chatram administrator.

Karkoon

He was the ordinary clerk.

Thimmathy

He worked as the representative of the Magistrate in certain respect and signed the judgement delivered by him in the court.

Sitneel

He was working as a writer and he took down the dictations the king and other high officials.⁶

Local Government

From inscriptions we gathered that the old political divisions continued but for all practical purposes the country was divided into five Subhas, each under a Subedhar. Each subhas were divided into a number of Simais and these were again sub divided into magamams. The subedhar was a most powerful man and he was not only the controller of the administration of the subha, but was also incharge of the military department.

Amins

Amins were appointed for the collection of revenue, who had power even to imprison a ryot for non payment. Each simais was further divided into 9 Taluks. They were further sub divided into 6 Taluks. Those taluks were divided into three divisions. The first division of 9 Taluks was under the control of principal Collector. The remaining six taluks were under the control of Deputy Collector.

Each village was self contained unites with its establishment which consisted of a Karnam, a nirganti (distributor of irrigation water, a vettiyan, a thalaiyari, Physician, Watcher of stray cattle, Washerman, Barbar, Carpenter and Smith. The village officers enjoyed various privileges and each one had a fixed share in the gross grain products. Besides paying a number of small taxes to the states, the villagers also made a contribution to the temple and aghahara. A record of rights and share called

Nattukanaku was maintained in the village. The Natuvanar or the proprietors of the village called mahajans. The villages were protected by the Kavalkars who constituted the rural constabulary.⁷

Revenue Administration

The Thanjavur region is the richest region in South India and it is irrigated by the cauvery, every inch of tract is noted for its fertility and immense yield. (Now it has lost the good irrigation facilities from the Cauvery). Drought the awful phenomena of nature devastates the country and drained its resources.

The most important item of revenue was the tax realised from land, most of the revenue got from the land was divided between the king and the British Company as per the treaty signed by both in 1799. As per the provisions of the treaty 1/5 of the income received by the state should go to the king and rest to the British company. So in collecting this land revenue the king had some difficulties. Some of the tenants of the land used to cheat the authorities by not giving real picture.

The Thanjavur region contained 5783 villages and they were divided into three groups as follows.

Ekhabhogam

Villages of which the sole occupancy right rested in one individual, numbering 1807.

Palabhogam

Numbering 2202 and Samudhayam or villages held in common numbering 1774.

Schwartz speak about the system of forming the rights of the revenue collection of districts to the highest border and the evil consequences that arose out of this heavy demand were made with the result that the cultivator was forced to give 60% or 70% of the yield from land.

Judicial Administration

The judicial system was still of the old type, during the time of Amarsingh the judges were corrupted. Schwartz had to appeal to Sir Archibald Cembell, Governor of Thanjavur to control Judicial Corruption. The judicial procedure consisted of a plaintiff defence judgement and execution. The king could upto any judgement. The judicial reverse used for the judicial establishment. The Niyaya Sabha (the Criminal court), The Mudriha sabha (the civil court), The

Dharma sabha (religious and temple litigation), The Nyaydisa sabha (Appeal court in respect of all the above) were the four kinds of courts known to them, but this four fold judiciary came into existence only after 1800 A.D.⁸

Before the Reign of Serfoji II Judicial system could not be known clearly. This corrupt and cruel Kaval system was abolished by the British in 1814 A.D. It was interested in a well regulated judicial system, with the help of pandits well versed in the relevant sastras, he prepared a judicial code out of the smriti fetsets for use by his judges.

The Thasildars were appointed by the king. The Thasildars were entitled to make enquiries on the cases brought to the notice of the officer concerned. In 1827 there was a letter ascertaining those powers to the Thasildars, but the details and the cases of the judgement has to be informed to the collector.

Various Kinds of Crimes

Purchasing theft property was considered to be an offence. Disserting other was considered to be a crime. Government servants who were sluggish in carrying their duties with regard the public sanitation were punished. If the temple towers were stolen the perchari and the parishagar was responsible for it.

Punishmets

There were several kinds of punishments, the levy of fines, collection of coconut in lieu of fines were the common penalties. Imprisonment in the extraction of work from criminals in their imprisonment was the other kind of punishment. Some time the culprits were taken around the streets in the town of Thanjavur after their hands were duly hand cuffed. Besides these types of humiliation punishments, there were evidences to show that the prisoners were awarded with the punishment of mutilation according to the nature of cases.

The administrative province was divided into 16 Karkanas and 12 Mahals. He who appointed administrative officer each of them. Karkanas were realtes politics, and the Mahals are relates the palace. Every scripts and orders were under the king control throughout the Chief officers.

Conclusion

The administrative efficiency of Raja Serfoji II was gained the appreciation from the Governor of Madras gave a certificate when he had come to Thanjavur in 1828 A.D. to

the Serfoji's new method of under ground drainage system During his period the P.W.D worked sincerely Serfoji's preliminary attention was shown in the public health and public services. He had introduced new method of under ground drainage system. Serfoji had made appropriate step to brought drinking water.

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