

Administrative System of the Nawabs of the Carnatic – A Study

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ABSTRACT:

The history of Carnatic from the beginning of the 18th century to the mid 19th century is indeed a remarkable event. In the Eighteenth Century the Nawabs of Carnatic played a significant role in the history of South India. It marks the creation of a Muslim Nationality and the genesis of political relations which affected the whole course of Indian history. This period of the Carnatic history is the starting point for the building up of the British Raj in India and it indicates, in fact the transition from the medieval to modern times. The region of Carnatic and the period from 1700-1855 AD proved to be a prominent period for the future of the Indian nationalism. In the following pages, an attempt has been made to spotlight the political divisions and officials and administrative system of the Nawabs of the Carnatic.

KEYWORDS: *Carnatic, Nawabs, Arcot, Administration*

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I. INTRODUCTION:

The famous Maratha ruler Shivaji (1674 – 1680 AD) invaded the Carnatic region during 1677 – 1678 AD. The invasion of Shivaji led to the conquest and establishment of Maratha rule at Vellore and Senji and exaction of the mandatory Maratha tax, the **Chauth** from the rest of the Carnatic. Harji Mahadik, the son of Shivaji, was appointed as the viceroy of Senji region.

After the death of Shivaji in 1680 AD, Mahadik declared himself an independent charge as Maharaja. As there was confusion, The Emperor Aurangzeb sent an army to the south under the Commander-in-chief, Zulfiqhar Ali Khan. Cambuksh, the youngest son of Aurangzeb, accompanied with him. In 1698, Zulfiqhar Ali Khan laid siege to Senji. But later in 1690 he was overthrown by the Marathas.

Aurangzeb introduced the term '**Nawab of Carnatic**' and Zulfiqhar Ali Khan became the First Nawab of Carnatic. The Mughal official in-charge of the military and civil government of the Nawabi was called Nawab. In 1703, when Zulfiqhar Ali Khan returned to Delhi, Daudh Khan was appointed as the second Nawab of the Carnatic by Aurangzeb. In 1710, Nawab Daudh Khan was recalled to Delhi and Saadatullah Khan became the Nawab of Carnatic in 1710 AD. After the death of Aurangzeb in 1707 AD, control of the Mughals lost its power on the distant provinces. The Carnatic Nawabs took the advantage of the situation and accumulated more powers and became legitimate rulers of the Carnatic.

POLITICAL DIVISIONS OF THE CARNATIC:

The Nawabs of Carnatic followed the same administrative system as the Mughals followed. There were 30 Nawabs under the Mughal rule. The Carnatic Nawabs were in-charge of the Carnatic region and there headquarters was Arcot. Trichy was made the joint headquarters by Nawab Muhammad Ali Walajahi.

The territory was divided into:

- *Subah (Provinces),
- *Sarkars (District),
- *Pargana (Taluk),
- *Gramam (Village) and
- *Mathura (Hamlet).

The territory under the Carnatic Nawabs had been divided into two Subahs

- ❖ They were Arcot Subahs consisting of Nellore, Chenglepet and Arcot districts.
- ❖ Trichy Subah consisting of Tirunelveli, Madurai and Trichy districts.

❖ Besides these the territories of the Marathas, Nayaks, Marava rulers, Palaiyagars were also tributaries. Tanjore, Travancore, Ramnad, Pudukkottai, Madras, etc. were brought under the Nawabs' control then and there.

The Carnatic Nawabs wanted to gain full power over whole of Tamilagham.

THE NAWABS' COURT:

The Nawab was considered the Supreme head of the Government, and possessed all the powers to govern the province. His position was equal to that of a king. He was assisted by a Council of Ministers. Arcot remained the capital of Nawabs for a long period of time until Nawab Muhammad Ali Walajahi changed it to Trichy, and later to Madras. The Court or '*The Durbar*' was the place where the official meetings were held and the political issues were discussed. The Chief Superintendent was in-charge of protocol. He also assigned places for the nobles and other dignitaries as per their rank or position in the Court. The senior family members of the Royal family held an important place in the Durbar.

DUTIES OF CHIEF QAZI:

The Chief Qazi was also known as *Qazi-ul-Quzzat*. He was the head of the judiciary. His presence in the Court was mandatory. His principal duty was to administer the matters as per the *Shariath* (Islamic Law) which was applicable both in civil and criminal cases. He was also held in-charge of appointing Qazis for Subahs, Sarkar, Pargana and towns. They had a separate Qazi who looks into army affairs.

PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATION:

The administration of the Carnatic Nawabs was divided into two Subahs (Provinces) namely Arcot and Trichy. These Subahs were given under the control of *Subahdar* (Governor) who were directly appointed by the Nawab. In general the *Subahdars* belong to the royal families. The tenure of the *Subahdar* was around three years.

Duties of Subahdar:

The Subahdar was assigned with the most important job of looking after the welfare of the public as well as the army. He was sole responsible for the maintenance of Law and Order in his province. A Subahdar who encouraged the agriculture, trade, commerce and uplifted the economy was regarded as the most efficient Subahdar. He had to look into other welfare activities like construction of Sarais (Guest Houses for the travelers), Gardens, wells, building water reservoir, etc. On the whole he had to develop his province and increase the revenue of the state.

The Provincial Diwan (The Revenue Officer):

The Provincial *Diwan* (The Revenue Officer) was directly appointed by the Nawab for each Subah. He was a full authoritative officer answerable only to the centre. He was the head of the Revenue Department in the Subah. The Provincial Diwan monitored the collection of revenue in his Subah and maintained a record of all the expenses occurred in the form of salaries to the officials and sub-ordinates. He was also in-charge of the agriculture, expansion of fertile lands for cultivation, etc. He also provided loans to the farmers from his office. A day-to-day Register was maintained by him who evinced the entries of amounts deposited towards the Royal Treasury by the Revenue Officials and *Zamindars* (Landlords). He was assisted by many clerks to maintain these accounts. Thus Nawabs were successful in assigning different duties and responsibilities to Subahdars and Diwans who worked independently under the control of Central power.

Bakshi (The Military Administrative Officer):

Bakshi was the Chief Administrative Officer of Military. He was directly appointed by the Central. His primary duty was to look after the army affairs of the province.

Duties of the Sadr and Qazi:

The *Sadr* and the *Qazi* were appointed for each city. They were assigned to administer justice and take decision as per *Shariath* (Islamic Law). They both had the right to operate funds for religious purposes. Qazi looked after the judicial duties including solemnizing marriages of Muslims where as Sadr was in-charge of collecting taxes and construction of mosques.

The Kotwal (Police):

The *Kotwal* had the magisterial duties of implementing law and order in the cities and towns. He had powers to punish the miscreants and also redressed the grievances of common public. He held a record of people entering and leaving the town. His duties also include protection of hoards, controlling the prices and

checking the weights and measures of the goods sold to people. Regarding thefts, he had to be an eagle's eye and held the responsibility of recovering stolen goods. He also prevented the city from social evils like Sati, infanticide and slaughtering the animals. Being more alert during nights to avoid theft and crime was the responsibility of *Kotwal*.

DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION:

Duties of Faujdar (District Head):

Districts were called as *Sarkars*. The head of each Sarkar was a '*Faujdar*' – the military executive. He looked into the matters of maintaining peace and order in the district. He had the power to enforce the subordinates to implement the orders of higher officials. His supreme duty was to look after rebellions and law and order issues and his primary duty was to safeguard the lives and properties of the natives of the area under his jurisdiction. Being the Chief Executive of the Sarkar, he had to ensure the safe passages to the traders and kept a vigilant eye over the recalcitrant Zamindars (Landlords). At times he also helped '*Amalguzar*' in the collection of Revenue.

Duties of Amalguzar (Head of Revenue Department of the District):

Amalguzar was the Head of the revenue department of the District. With the help of subordinate officials he had to assess and supervise the revenue collection. An efficient Amalguzar was expected to increase the lands for cultivation and urge the farmers to pay revenue. He maintained all the records and even sent the daily reports of receipts and expenditure to the Provincial Diwan.

Duties of the Thana (Police Station):

The *Thana* (Police Station) was stationed in and around the city for the maintaining Law and Order in the districts. The head of the Thana was called *Thanedar*. He was appointed by Diwan at the recommendation of the Subahdar. His ranking was under the Faujdar of the District. Thanedar was also in-charge of arranging provisions for the army.'

TALUK AND ITS ADMINISTRATION:

Sub-districts or Taluks were called as '*Pargana*'. The Sarkars were divided into smaller administrative units named '*Parganas*'. The *Shiqqdar* was the Chief Administrative Officer of Pargana and was supported by *Amils* in the collection of revenue. Duties and responsibilities of Amils were same as the Amalguzar of Sarkar had. To define more vividly:

- ❖ Shiqqdar - a military administrative officer
- ❖ Amil - the finance officer
- ❖ Fotadar - the Treasurer
- ❖ Qanugo - the head of the village
- ❖ Patwaris - the other important officers of Pargana.

VILLAGE ADMINISTRATION:

Village was called as *Grammam*. This was the smallest unit in the administration of Nawabs. The villages were under the full control of *Kotwals*. They were sole responsible of maintaining law and order in their deputed villages. They had to interference of any state officers in the matters of village.

REVENUE ADMINISTRATION:

Nawab Anwaruddin Khan established Walajahi dynasty in 1744 in the Carnatic region. He set up civil administration and revenue administration with the support of different officials in Carnatic. The Walajahi dynasty ruled Carnatic for 110 years. This dynasty developed sound principles of revenue administration. The Survey of Land was done keenly. The land of cultivation was divided into three categories - (i) Good (ii) Moderate and (iii) Fertile. Their sources of income through cultivate lands was planned systematically. On the other hand the expenditure was also planned and well organized. The chief sources of revenue during the reign of Carnatic Nawabs were as follows:

- i) Revenue from lands
- ii) Rural Taxes (Gifts) from dignitaries
- iii) Customs from Ports
- iv) Salt Monopoly and
- v) Mints

Out of the above mentioned sources, Land Revenue was the most significant source of income to pile up state's treasury during the period of Carnatic Nawabs. All the departments of Government depended upon the Land Revenue. During the times of natural calamities like drought, floods and famine the peasants were exempted

from the tax. All the revenue officers were ordered to be kind towards peasants during such times. Even the British who ruled the region was dependent on land revenue. They introduced several reforms to collect more taxes from the peasants. On the whole the Nawabs of Carnatic implement an effective measure of administration.

JUDICIAL ADMINISTRATION:

The chief Qazi was known as *Qazi-ul quzzat*. He was the head of the judiciary. Under the Nawabs of Carnatic, there were two agencies in the *Subah* to administer justice. One was the *Subadar* who acted on the judicial powers delegated to him by the Emperor. The second was the provincial *Qazi* to whose court cases pertaining to religion, criminal and civil would be mostly handed over. The *Qazi-i Subah* was the provincial *Qazi* as well as the *Qazi* of the capitalcity of the *Subah*. Sometimes, he was also given charge of one or more *Parganas* or towns. In the judicial administration as prevailed under the Nawabs, there was a provision of appointment of *Qazi* to every town, *Sarkar*, *Pargana* and village having a sufficiently big population.

As a general rule, in the selection of suitable candidates for the appointment to the office of *Qazi*, considerations of high learning, integrity and otherwise suitability were probably subjected to the hereditary claims of the famous families of the *Qazis*. Theoretically, a *Qazi* was expected to be conversant with law and religious sciences and required to be firm and orthodox in religious belief.

Under the Nawabs, the chief duty of a *Qazi* was that of adjudication. He was to settle disputes and punish offenders in accordance with the provisions of *Shariath*.

In civil matters, no property transaction could be considered legally valid and enforceable unless and until it was registered in the court of *Qazi*. In other words, all the property transactions, whether sale deeds (*bainamas*), gift deeds (*hiba-namas*), or transfer deeds (*tamluk-namas*) were to be registered with the local *Qazi* irrespective of religion or community. If a case was not solved in local *Qazi's* court, then it was referred to Imperial Court. *Qazis* were also to decide cases relating to debt. Debtors were imprisoned after the claims of the creditors were established and inability of the former to pay his debt was proved before a *Qazi*. *Qazi's* role was also crucial in the organization of trade and commerce, as well. He settled disputes between the merchants and artisans. He registered contracts and agreements between merchants, and his seal on their mutual agreements not only rendered the agreement indefeasible, but also brought it under the protection of state. He verified and attested copies of agreements and contracts. Tolls were levied on goods in transit after a valuation made by the *Qazi* of the place. *Qazi* was also known to mediate on behalf of the merchants with the state, on such issues as taxation, removal of a corrupt officer and fixation of prices. In the discharge of his functions, the *Qazi* was assisted by a deputy (*na'ib*). His office was more or less hereditary in nature.

MILITARY ADMINISTRATION:

The Nawabs' army consisted of infantry, artillery and elephantry, but no navy. Cavalry was the most important branch of the Nawabs' army. The emperor himself acted as the commander in chief and had a number of commander's under him called *Sipahsalar*s. Artillery was considered necessary for "the siege of fortresses and naval actions."

II. CONCLUSION:

The Nawab was the head of all powers. A number of ministers were directly appointed by the Nawab to assist him in the administration. Similarly, to keep them in check, he adopted the principle of checks and balances. To have an effective administration, the Empire was divided into Subas (provinces), Sarkars, Parganas and villages. The provincial administration was on the lines of the Centre, headed by separate officers. Here also none of the officer enjoyed supreme powers. Both the Subadars and Diwans worked independently and were responsible to the Centre only. Cities and port-towns had separate administrative machinery. The Kotwal in the cities normally took care of the law and order situation. At local level, the pargana was the most important administrative unit while the villages formed the smallest unit of administration. On the whole the Nawabs of Carnatic implement an effective measure of administration.

END NOTES:

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