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**Dr. Avadh Narayan**

Associate Professor,  
Department of History,  
Culture and Archaeology, Dr.  
Rammanohar Lohia Avadh  
University, Ayodhya,  
Uttar Pradesh, India

## **A study of the land grant process and its impact on the economic and social structure in the ancient Indian system**

**Dr. Avadh Narayan**

### **Abstract**

In the Ancient Indian system, a new consciousness arises by studying its various forms and characteristics for which the creative system of land grant was established. It becomes essential to study various aspects of land rights along with social and economic analysis in this process. Generally, what were the possibilities of the circumstances under which land grant would have been made and with which elements its constitutional relation was established, it becomes essential to pay attention to all the aspects. The elements which are related to the land grant are seen as follows. Donor, donee, donated land, official class, political tax and occasion and purpose of grant. In the last part, in most of the grants, the opponents are cursed and the name of the manager (official who made the will) and the scribe is written. In the description of the donor, there is a description of his tradition up to his (usually five or six) generations and many times his lineage is established with the Surya or Chandravansh to show the importance of his lineage specialty. Various characteristics of the donor are described in the grant, especially his victories are mentioned, but there is no description of defeat. The description of his circumstances refers to political, religious and some important achievements. A special trend is seen in the characteristics of donations, that is, embellishing the donations made by him for the sake of religion, i.e., exaggerating them. In the process of grant, the donor's capital and his victory camp (Vijay Stambh) are exaggerated.

**Keywords:** Ancient Indian system, donor, land grant, political tax, religious

### **Introduction**

In the analysis of donations, various characteristics of the life history of the recipients of donations, i.e., the beneficiaries, are mentioned. Since the recipient of the donation letter mainly belonged to the Brahmin class, he was identified by his gotra and pravara. The details of his original residence and the place from where his ancestors moved from their original place are seen in a special way. The number of generations mentioned in the donation recipient is not as much as that of the donor, which is a point worth considering. However, some ancestors who were particularly important and learned are formally mentioned. The Vedic branch of education to which he was associated is mentioned. His literary achievements are praised. Along with the description of the land or village given, all the details are available about the Brahmins and their transfers and their settlements, which provides information about various aspects of history.

The third important list in relation to land donation is of the officials to whom information about the land grant is given. The name and designation of the official is mentioned in the grant, or only the 'designation' is mentioned. There is a list of officials in the record, the hierarchy in the list is definitely taken care of. State employees perform various tasks, such as political, literary, military and administrative, etc. The designations of officials provide information about the forms of state organization, and the names of individuals clearly indicate the role of caste.

Donated land or village is exempted from land taxes. Land taxes are an integral part of the subject matter of the grant, the meaning of taxes keeps changing from one state to another and from one time to another. In some grants, details of all revenue 'taxes' are available, but in other grants, there is a difference in their list. The various taxes given in the form of cash, goods or labor are mentioned separately for exemption so that certain taxes will be transferred to a certain beneficiary, in the same way, to the beneficiary to whom many political and administrative powers have been clearly and duly entrusted.

**Corresponding Author:**

**Dr. Avadh Narayan**

Associate Professor,  
Department of History,  
Culture and Archaeology, Dr.  
Rammanohar Lohia Avadh  
University, Ayodhya,  
Uttar Pradesh, India

In some of the charters, there is a mention of the arrangement for direct transfer of the farmers, craftsmen living in the village as well as the tenants occupying the plots. The grantee was also given the right to evict the farmers cultivating the existing land and settle new farmers in their place.

Mainly, the list of taxes and exemptions was attached with the details of the granted plot and village. It was also necessary to identify the status quo of the land and the village. The name and physical location of the village also indicate whether the land is located in a non-cultivated area, or in a semi-cultivated area or in a settled area. The demarcation of the land and its geographical and ecological background are also known. Although agricultural resources, trees, plants, ponds, pastures etc. are also mentioned in it, in many land grants, the names of the revenue and administrative units are also mentioned in which the land village is located. The land grants describe the identification of the elderly people of the village and the different types of residents according to their castes. Information is also available about the social structure of the village.

Various grants must have been given on the occasion of various yagnas mentioned in the Sutra literature. In this way, many yagnas were performed by newly-made Kshatriyas to strengthen their position. Old Kshatriyas must also have performed yagnas to strengthen their position and to become more prestigious. Family yagnas and various rites must have been important occasions for land grants. Kings also used to visit pilgrimage places and this practice was very popular in the early medieval period. So they used to start it with land grants. Land grants must have been considered appropriate as an occasion to strengthen victory.

The purpose of the grant is also mentioned in some inscriptions. The donor used to grant land for his own welfare, his ancestors' welfare as well as for the family's welfare. Land or villages were given so that the recipient could perform some religious activities (especially in the context of temples) and contribute to the promotion of some branch of Vedic studies or run religious, educational institutions known as Agraharas. Agrahara and Brahmadev were related to the livelihood of Brahmins, it is clear that grants were given to temples, monasteries, Buddhist Vihars and Jain Basadis so that they could carry out social welfare works like religious, educational and help to the poor.

The successor princes were frightened in such a way that if they withdrew or snatched the grant, all kinds of calamities would fall on them. The political, social responsibilities and obligations of the beneficiaries towards the donors are generally not mentioned. According to some charters called tax governance, there is a mention of taking some tax from the donors, in some other examples there is an instruction to stay away from treason or sedition against the king.

In most land grants, the name of the scribe and the grant executioner is also found, the grant executioners were without exception officers related to war and peace, which is called Sandhivigrahik. The name of the literate craftsman who engraved the grant is found in many charters. Land grant documents were engraved on stone or brass plates. Gupta period Smritis indicate that grants were written on perishable materials, cloth and birch bark, so no remains have survived in the present times. The ancient records that have been read are not of general rulers, but of special rulers like Ashoka, Samudragupta, Gautamiputra Satkarni etc. In

one of these records, there is a mention of tax exemption on religious grounds, but there is no mention of land grant in any record.

Although Kautilya has recognized this system in Arthashastra. On the basis of epigraphic evidence, the first land grants were issued by the Satavahana rulers in the first century BC. Their contemporary Kushana rulers did not make land grants. There is a lack of epigraphic land grants in North India in the first century and second century AD, but the Satavahanas and Ikshwakus issued land grants. In Central India, during the fourth-fifth centuries, Gupta feudatories issued large-scale land grants, while only small grants by Gupta emperors are available as evidence. Harsha and many rulers of the early medieval period gave large-scale land grants.

Inscriptional evidence is far more important than literary sources. Despite P.V. Kane's important work on Dharmashastras, there is a difficulty of one or two centuries in dating them. But since dates have been given for land grants from the Gupta period, therefore, their chronology can be done on the basis of Pura-Lipi, there will not be much difference in it, as there would be in the Smriti period<sup>[1]</sup>. It can also be determined to which area the land grant belongs, but it is not possible to decide about the Smriti texts.

Some shortcomings of land grants also come to light, like differentiating real grants from fake grants, because clever Brahmins used to make them according to their own convenience many times to take over and increase land property, to give the color of authenticity, traditional method has been followed in these grants, the genealogy given is also correct, but wrong information has been given about the name, area, land related and other details. Such grants have been called coercion. Again, the tendency to separate the essence from the vulgar in land grants is not completely negligible. An ideal format has been adopted in most grants. Thus, these grants must have been made for eternal times; as long as the sun and the moon exist, the grants will remain. Examples of their acceptance and renewal are found during the reign of Gurjar-Pratiharas<sup>[2]</sup>. The praise of the king that is seen in the land grants does not have a special impact on the economic life. In a grant letter from Assam, verses from Raghuvansh have been reproduced verbatim. Such evidence is not found for literary examples in the inscriptions. In the beginning, there is evidence of grants being given to Brahmins on a very large scale. The main purpose of these grants was religious and charitable. But later there is evidence of grants being given to Kayasthas and other non-brahmin subordinates and officers, there does not seem to be any correlation in this<sup>[3]</sup>. Thus, the objectives declared for the grants reveal contradictions in relation to their actual objectives, results and implications.

On being discussed in economic terms, there can be two reasons for land grants, one is the expansion of agriculture, an attempt to make the economy self-sufficient, basic questions can be raised about land ownership, productivity rate, mutual relations between agricultural crafts, fragmentation or consolidation of holding areas, the effect of monetary system etc. The second intention can be that there should be a proper analysis of the economic material about land grants. Thus, along with the villages allotted land grants, identifying the revenue units under which the villages were located, details of the topography of those

villages etc. Information can also be obtained in the context of the multi-village revenue unit run by the Rajputs.

All grants have details of all the revenues etc. given to the recipients of the donation. The meaning of words like Uparikar and Udrang in the Gupta period is also controversial. The words Prabanikar, Visantiathuprastha, Yamalikambali, Kumargadiyanak, Barbajhe of the Gahadwal grants are yet to be clarified. Despite regional differences in taxes, we also have to see why there is a discrepancy in the same area. If the taxes payable by the village to the state are analysed chronologically, it can throw light on the various stages of development of the tax system. About ten taxes are mentioned in the Gahadwal grants. But in relation to other grants, it is clear that the burden of taxes increased. From the state privileges given to the donors, we can throw light on the fact related to land ownership. As far as Brahmins are concerned, the grants given to them increased the process of private ownership of land. From the economic perspective, if an analytical analysis is done of the rights of Brahmins, monasteries, temples, Jagirdars, citizens and military officers who were given land as grants, it throws light on various levels.

Information regarding agricultural production can be obtained from land grants. Transfer of the entire village and along with it the farmers who used to give a part of their produce to the middlemen. There is no clear mention in this regard in the grants. There is a clear mention of transfer of farmers, craftsmen, traders etc. to the donors in the Chandel grants. This system was established to run the self-sufficient economy of the village. In a way, it was an attempt to establish the system of serfdom.

### Conclusion

Many grants of West and Central India from the sixth century AD, along with giving the right to plough, sow and use the land, also had the right to get the land cultivated by other people or let them use it. This makes it clear that the farmers did not have control over the allotted area. But special light can be thrown in this regard on the basis of land grants.

Grants can also throw light on such resources and productions that the following crops were produced in a particular area. It is clear from the Chandel grants that sugarcane, cotton and flax were the main crops of eastern central India. In Assamese grants, there is mention of many beneficial trees like jamun, bael, mango, silk cotton tree etc. In Chandela, Gahadwal and other grants, there is mention of the names of major products.

From the time of Satvahan grants, there is mention of the unit of measuring land, Nivartan. There is mention of land measurement in the Gupta period too. In some grants of Bengal and Assam, there is mention of the measurement of land, its price and the quantity of produce. In this way, the feudal economy gave birth to a new power of production. In the land grants, there is also mention of tur (Persian, wheel), which is said to be used for irrigation in Rajasthan and Gujarat. The word bapi, which is mentioned repeatedly, means sowing. Vapis are mentioned in large numbers in Rajasthan and Gujarat.

From the later grants, it can also be known in which places coins were used. In the land grants of the Palas, there is mention of Shaulkik and Tarik, which makes it clear that trade had not completely disappeared. Thus, if the List of Brahmi Inscriptions in Northern India written by D.R.

Bhandarkar is revised and updated in the context of North India, new references will be established in it. However, it can certainly be said that the number of land rights in the South is much higher. There is an important need for special research on this land grant process.

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