

TEMPLE AND THE VILLAGE ASSEMBLY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SIDDHALINGAMADAM

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Abstract

The temple occupied a place of vital importance in the history of South India. It constituted a powerful social and economic entity. There is no doubt that the temple served not only as a place of worship but also as the focus of the material life of the people. In this chapter the inscriptions of Siddhalingamadam temple mention the different social groups and economic milieu of the village connected and concerned with the temple and the village. The donations made to the temple were in cash and kind and such donations have been properly studied. People belonging to the various castes live together in this village. In those days the temple must have been the common place where all the people forgot their minor differences.

Key Words: Sabha, Mahasabha, Urar, Nagarattar

Introduction

The temple occupied a place of vital importance in the history of South India. It constituted a powerful social and economic entity. There is no doubt that the temple served not only as a place of worship but also as the focus of the material life of the people. In this chapter the inscriptions of Siddhalingamadam temple mention the different social groups and economic milieu of the village connected and concerned with the temple and the village. The donations made to the temple were in cash and kind and such donations have been properly studied. People belonging to the various castes live together in this village. In those days the temple must have been the common place where all the people forgot their minor differences.¹

Brahmins played a very role in the history and cultures of Tamilnadu and occupied a prominent position in the Sangam society. However, the works relating the divisions mentioned by them are different from fourfold Varna system of the Aryans. It is clear that the Varna type of caste divisions came to be established in Sangam society itself. Brahmins are otherwise known as “Andhanar”, “Parpanar” and “Irupirappalar” (dvija-twice born). The terms “Vediyar”, “Maraiyor”, “Aravor” and so on were also used to denote the Brahmins. The study of Vedas, recitation of Vedas, teaching of Vedas, performing sacrifices, giving gifts and receiving donations were the six-fold functions of the Parpanar. Yet Tolkappiyar has set out that Brahmins could also become kings. In the Sangam period, Brahmins were employed as advisors, messengers and preceptors. Brahmins received gifts of tax-free lands, gold, cow and the like. The poets of the Sangam period

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such as Kapilar, Paranar, Kadiyalur Rudrangannanar, Damodaran and others were Brahmins.²

Brahmins were living in their exclusive quarters. Those quarters were known as Parpanachcheri. In Kurunthogai, a literary piece of Sangam period, the street of Brahmins was called Asil teru. Perumpanarruppadai mentions a hamlet on the way to Kanchipuram as Maraikappalar Uraipati (Colony of defenders of Vedas). In the fourth and third centuries B.C.E., the Maurya empire which dominated North India professed a different faith causing hindrance to the Brahmins and that was why they started migrating to the south from the north. Various gotras existed in the sections of Brahmins like Kaundinya, Vatula, Kausika, Atreya, Kusyapa, Bharadvaja, Moudgala and Kapi. It is true that the Kalabharas were opposed to the Hindu faith and Varnasramadharm. The Lands gifted to the Brahmins were disposed to put a stop to the special privileges enjoyed by the Brahmins in their period.³

It is known from the Velvikudi copper plates. These plates mention that a Brahmins called Narasingan a descendant of Korkai Kilan Nerkorran prayed to the Pandya king Jatila Parantaka Nedunjadayan (765-815 C. E.,) to restore his original grant which was granted to Korkai Kilan Nerkorran by Palyagasalai Mudukudumi a Sangam Pandya king. During the rule of the Pallava period, the Brahmins enjoyed a privileged position with the grant of brahmadeyas. Brahmins in large numbers migrated from Andra country to Tamilnadu and settled in Tondaimandalam of the Kaveri regions. The residential area of Brahmins was known as agraharam. Among the Brahmins there were divisions based on numerous gotras and sutras. They came into three groups as Adi Saiva Brahmanas, Vaishnava Brahmanas and Veda-reciting Brahmanas. Since they were favoured by the kings, they were politically powerful. The sway of Brahmins was very marked in the Chola period. Since there was a growth of temples during their period, a large number of Brahmin families from the north were invited to migrate to their country. Several brahmadeyas were gifted to them. These were well administrated by those residing there.⁴

The prosperity of the temple depended much on the co-operation of the local bodies. This temple seems to have received the whole hearted support of not only the local governing body but also that of the village. Assemblies of the surrounding villages of sabhas were the main local body which was responsible for not only the temple supervision but also for the land transactions including the land donations to the temple.⁵

Village Sabha

An inscription of Rashtrakuta Krishna III in his 18th R.Y. - C.E. 957 found on the South wall of the front mandapa in the Vyagrapadheeswarar temple, Siddhalingamadam registers a gift of punsey of land in the southern hamlet called Koliyur of Sirringur, a brahmadeya by the sabhai to the devaradiyar named Tiruppulppakavar Nirittavitanki and her descendants, as tax-free nrittabhogam, for performing dance while the god was taken out in procession.⁶

An inscription of Kulottunga I Chola in his 31st R.Y.- 12th C.C.E. found on the East wall of the front mandapa in the Vyagrapadheeswarar temple, Siddhalingamadam registers a gift of 2500 kuli of land as tax free madappuram to provide food to the andarkal praying in the temple by Suryadevi alias Niraithavanjeydal, wife of Nanurruvan Malaiyaman alias Rajendra Chola chedirayan of Kiliyur, after purchasing the land from the sabhai of Sirringur. Also records the gift of nattam land, purchasing it from the brahmana Bharatvaji Kumarasamipparayan and others, by the same Suryadevi. Among the boundaries a piece of land marked as 'natakappangu'.⁷

An inscription of Vikrama Chola in his 15th R.Y. - C.E. 1132-33 found on the South side of the prakara

wall in the Vyagrapadheeswarar temple, Siddhalingamadam registers the gift of two veli of land, after purchase as iraiyili devadana for worship and offerings to the palliyarai nachiyar in the temple by a certain Alavandal, daughter of Malaiyaman Nanurruvan Malayan alias Rajendran chola chedirayan of Kiliyur, and wife of Malaiyaman Iranian Surri alias Rajendra Chola Malayakularayan of the same place. It is stated that she caused the above mentioned image to be made for the merit of her Mother Udaiyal Suryadevi alias Niraidavanjeydal. Of the two veli of land, one veli in Sirringur was to be a kudininga devadana and to be cultivated by the sabhai of the place who should pay the income to the god. It is stated that the donor also gave two kasu to the sabhai in this connection.⁸

Mahasabhai

An inscription of Vikrama Chola in his 3rd R.Y.- C.E.1120-21 found on the North wall of the prakara in the Vyagrapadheeswarar temple, Siddhalingamadam registers a gift of 500 kuli of land, after purchase, as devadana to the temple by Nilisingi, wife of Malaiyaman Tirukkalaimarudu alias Alvan Angara Malaiyaman of Kiliyur in Tirumunaipadi Tamar nadu. The gift was intended for various items for worship and offerings to the deity while the processions conducted on all amavasi days,(i.e.) twelve in number, in a year. The land was purchased from the mahasabhai of Sirringur for a sum of 3 anradu narkasu by the donor. It details all the offerings at the time of worship and their equivalent in rice.⁹

An inscription of Vikrama Chola in his 4th R.Y.- C.E. 1121-22 found on the north wall of front mandapa in the Vyagrapadheeswarar temple, Siddhalingamadam registers gift of land by Adavallan Vasudevan alias Mudikonda Chola muvendavelan, matyasta of Munjuru alias Panditakashti chaturvedimangalam in Oymanadu. 700 kuli of land was purchased from the mahasabaiyar of Sirringur and endowed for expense of procession of the deity on Sundays. Sacred food for which, rice kari, ghee, curd, salt, aracanut, betel leaves and oil for lamps were offered, in the morning service.¹⁰

Urar

An inscription of Parantaka I Chola in his 22nd R.Y. C.E. 928-29 found on the South wall of the front mandapa in the Vyagrapadheeswarar temple, Siddhalingamadam registers a sale deed excuted between urar of Marudur and one Iraiyan kudikilavan designated as 'engalmakanar'. The land with the right of irrigation of 1/5 of the capacity from the channel 'Kalakkili' was sold for 72 kalanju of gold. The land donated as tiruppalipuram and had been exempted from paying the tax niramanji.¹¹

An inscription of Kulottunga I Chola in his 49th R.Y. C.E. 1118-19 found on the North wall of the prakara in the Vyagrapadheeswarar temple, Siddhalingamadam refers to the sale of land by the urar of Semamarrur in Tirumunaippadi Emapperur nadu in Gangaikondasola valanadu, also refers to the festival in the month of Vaikasi.¹²

Nagarattar

An inscription of Vikrama Chola in his 6th R.Y. C.E. 1124 found on the West wall of Second prakara in the Vyagrapadheeswarar temple, Siddhalingamadam registers the gift of 1000 kuli of land by the nagarattars to provide food offerings at wakingup service and the pulavar talaivan sandhi. The land is stated to be a gift probably by the king, to the nagarattar could be assumed from the word Perumal kani. The village Marudur is mentioned as forming a boundary of the gifted land.¹³

The religious and secular traditions to be followed in the temple are being followed. With due care, the

temple is being maintained properly. The management of the temple looks after the daily maintenance.

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