CHAPTER – V

ADMINISTRATION OF THE TEMPLES

As a sacred centre of worship, the temple catered to the religious needs of the people of Attur area. It was their conscience-keeper. For any good or bad, the people believed that it was the blessings or curse of God. In order to keep Him in merriment they conducted a large number of rituals and festivals. They invoked and propitiated Him with all paraphernalia. Piety being a major force of worship, a number of people flocked at the Attur temple.\(^1\) The temple was built on agamic basis. Rituals and festivals were conducted in the temple according to agamic prescriptions.\(^2\) To perform these, priests and their sub-ordinates were appointed accommodated, remunerated and regulated in the temple.

As custodians of rituals and festivals, the priests found much work. They found their economic position safe in these celebrations. Therefore, the birth asterism of gods, kings\(^3\) and other devotees were celebrated with much éclat.

The word “Temple” has a link with religion as per sayings of Thirumanthiram “இறங்கும் உடல் கோவில்” which means our body itself is a temple. Temples have been centres of worshipping God for centuries.

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1. This is evident even today from the huge gatherings of the people during annual festivals or on specific occasions like Kumbabhisekam and Pankuni uttiram and Sivaratri festivals.
3. ARE 1949-50, No.305.
We have nearly 40,000 temple in Tamil Nadu out of which 30,000 are small temples, situated in villages. All these are ancient temples and we can infer historical age of temples, since every historical period had its own art, architecture, types of temples. Temples built for Lord Siva and Vishnu have different patterns. For example, Madakkovil, Hill temples forest temples sea shore temples are different from each other, but temples belonging one type say Hill temple have common structures, sculptures etc in general. But all temples had been learning centres of philosophy of life, religion and intricacies (இலக்கிய இராச்சியங்கள்) of arts.

Appar syas in Thevaram that there are 78 temples for Lord siva in addition to six more types of temples namely குகைகளாலாம், தொட்டைகளாலாம், தீரங்களாலாம், மாடுகளாலாம் மறுமை அலங்காரங்கள். The belief is if one prays to lord siva in these temples he is free from Karma

Chronological information’s about Hindu religious law

The interest of kings, Jameens and Mutts or other rulers in the maintenance of the temples also was a service to religion and culture. For example British Dynasty framed “Charitable Trust law” to maintain our heritage, such a law on charitage Trusts was not found in the Hindu religious laws before 1927. This law empowered executives of charitable trusts to utilize not only income from Trusts but also the assets if it is for a good public cause.

Periods of Religious Mutts and Religious literature

In the early vedic days there were neither temples nor Mutts. But choultries offered food and water to the poorer choultries (சுவாமிகள்) were
run by richer class of society. Slowly saints mutts were installed in the eighth century by Aadhi sankara, to propagate advaidha, philosophy. Later Ramanujar installed his Dvaidha (கோயில்) Mutt. Which was followed by Madhwacharya who installed a Mutt to preach Visishadhvaidha philosophy. Later Saiva mutts were developed to propagate the philosophy of ‘Saivam’. The literary contribution of these mutts through (அறிவுற்றுலை கலையுடைய நாள்) gave birth to “Religious literature during the period of sangam literature.

**Idol worship**

From Vedic time to the Budha period there is no mention about idol worship. Only around 6th century, temples were built to worship God in idols with the faith that God exists in Pancha Boodha (earth, air, water fire and Akasa) Kings, Jameendhars and other richer society donated lands, money or food for conducting Poojas, festivals in the temples. The Kings administrators scrutinized or audited the expenses.

The Hindu Dharma of believing the “Temples as (presiding) places of gods” was accepted by Muslims while they ruled a part of India. Britishers who were later rulers wanted the temples and charitable Trusts to be useful to the society and also felt it was their duty to protect human rights of Indian in their faith in God.

Pujas are conducted by the priests, Donations are given to the temple. The emergence of festivals is the main cause for the emergence of an administrative system. Administration of the Navakailasam temples were under the control of Mutts. The power of the Mutts was transferred to the

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company in later days. Company gave the administrative power to the Sthalasthar. Administration of this temples were to then over by the Government only in the twentieth century.

Mutts were formed to proceed after the proper conducted of worship in the temples. There is sufficient evidence from the inscription that from early eleventh century onwards there was an institution known as Mutts.5

Laws and amendments on Hindu religious Endowment and Charitable Trusts

The first law passed by British rulers was “இந்து வாசிகு தேசியக் கையிட்டோர்” Regulation No. 10/1810 in the year 1810 in Bengal Regulation No. 7/1817 in Madras and later in Bombay in the 1827 were passed During this period Muslims who were ruling in other areas gave liberal donations to Hindu Temples. British rulers also protected Masks in the areas under their regime. This helped them to continue their business trade in India. This also developed the opinion that Britishers respected “The Hindu culture and heritage.”

The administrative officers and commissioners of British dynasty were instructed to Co-operate with the leaders of Mutts, executive heads of temples Masks in villages and cities. Indirectly British rulers were watching the supervisors of Hindu temples and masks. Thus the temples were protected during the period 1817 to 1842.6

During the period of 1839 to 1842 Christian (religious leaders) popes and Bishops opposed the idea of Christians management of Hindu Temples. They also opposed the regulation acts of 1810 and 1817. Accordingly Judiciary of Britian wrote a letter to the then Government general of British government in India, to withdraw their powers to govern and supervise the Hindu Temple and to handover the same to the Public leaders with faith in Hindu religion on 10.08.1840.\(^7\)

Accordingly the temple administration was handed over to local bodies but with two conditions. The farmers working in the lands of temples must be protected. The revenue collected from temples and trusts during British period up to 1840 will be with the British government in India. In case of excers of income from Trusts and Temples, it will be spent for social causes such as digging of wells, improving water resources, laying of roads for fetter transportation etc., The government did not handover the power to the local trustees and local heads of Mutts and temples. Indirectly the income of charitable Trusts and temples were taken by the British governments which reflects that they did not had enough faith on local trustees.

The following changes were introduced in Temple administration (a) small temples were handed to Poojaris. (b) Temple with moderate income were handed to a committee consisting of village officer and a religious minded popular person of the village. (c) The government respected the religious practices adopted in the bigger temples and accepted the administrator by heritage. (d) special attention was to Devasthanams of Thiruppathy, Kancheepuram Varadaraja Perumal, Thiruvallur,

\(^7\) Chandra Mudaliar. C., State and Religious Endowments in Madras, Madras, 1976, p.37.
Sriperumpudur, Thiruvannamalai, Srirengam and Malai Kottai Temples. The Government accepted Administrative powers by heritage for certain temples and appointed New Trustees to the other temples in consultation with Revenue Board.

By 1845 British Government withdrew direct control of temples which continued till 1863. During this period inefficient administration, mismanagement of accounts mishandling swindling of money from Trusts, Domination richer and powerful class etc., forced the government to delete regulation No. 7/1817 and enforce 20\textsuperscript{th} act. This act gave power to appoint local committees, but the power limits of the local committees were not defined In case the orders of the committee were not obeyed, the committee had to appeal to Judiciary Indirectly the committee did not have adequate powers for development of temples. Moreover committee members were elected by devotees for which a proper voters list was not available. The committee had no power to remove any member of local committee except through Judiciary.

In 1872 action plans were suggested to improve upon the decentralized administration. There bills named Karmichell Bill, Challivens bill and Muthusamy Iyers Bill were prepared Chief Justice Muthusamy Iyers bill was the first bill passed in 1919 by legislative council. This bill was common to Hindus and Muslims later in the year 1923. Hindu Religious Endowment act was passed especially for Hindu Temple Administration. All the accounts of Hindu Temples and trusts were audited, thus came under the direct control of the government. Thus a central Board for each state was formed to control the District Boards, local Boards, local committees etc., Thus an indirect control and scrutinisation was introduced.
An amendment for the Hindu Religious Endowment act was passed in 1925, and commissioners were appointed and tax was levied for the supervision of temples as per the amendment act of 1925. A special act to frame a separate Board for temple administration was framed in August of 1927, which was in force till 1951. As per that act in 1921, Hindu Religious endowment board was made autonomous. This Board was given powers to appoint five commissioners, out of them one was president of the Board. The temple under the Jurisdiction of each commissioner were well defined. The commissioners were given powers to be Judges in specified areas. Each Taluk had a committee to appoint executive officers and additional commissioner assistant commissioners were given powers to define and develop the temple properties. If there is any grievance with regard to the properties of temples. The leased lands of the temples cannot be owned by the lessee as per the law of 1927. The law of 1927 permitted Harijans to enter the temple and abolished “Devadasi methods” 1927 law prohibited individuals from enjoying the income from Trusts and Temples. 1927 law was in force even after Independence till 1951.

A special law was passed in 1951 to bring a separate Hindu religious endowment department instead of Hindu religious endowment board. The powers of the Board were transferred to Hindu religious endowment department.8

British rulers handled the temples and trust carefully with due regard to religious values. They never disrespected our heritage or culture or religious preaches. Many British officers have donated to our temples. We have to

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8 Chandra Mudaliar, op.cit., p.303.
appreciate the way in which they administered temples and trust and framed laws and amendments.

**Salary**

For recognized temple servants, after the regularization is declared, as per the Hindu religious and charitable endowment commissioners order, Time scale is to be fixed. As for as the temple staff is concerned, salary is to be fixed by the temple authorities. It does not exceed 40 of the total income of the temple. As far as temporary temple staff is concerned, salary is to be disbursed on the basis of daily wages.

**Income**

The primary source of Income is received by the collections from Hundi. The income due to the auction of the fertile and barren lands in the secondary source of Income. Besides the auction for the vehicles stand and chapel stand is also considered as Treasury source of income. Above all the collection in respect of tickets for the entrance into the Arthamandapam is also taken as an auxillary source of income. The income received from the above said sources are used for the maintenance of the temple and to meet the day to day contingent expenditure for the rites and ceremonies connected with the daily Pujas and for the festive occasions.

**Election of Committee Members**

As far as the Navakailasams are concerned, the nine temples are administered by executive officers Grade III under temple act 46(II). The trustees are elected by district election committee and appointed by joint commissioner of the Hindu religious and charitable endowment department.
After the completion of the tenure of office of the trustee, till the appointment of the next fit persons are to be appointed by the Assistant commissioner and Joint Commissioner as per the Grade of the temple. If the list of trusted exceed more than three, two more trustees are anointed by the Government. If the trustees are more than three in number one among them is elected as president by election. The tenure of office of the trustee is three years. Once in three years trustees are elected in rotation method.