CHAPTER V

Administration
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The word 'Temple' has a close link with religion as per sayings of Thirumanthiram Oonudumbu Aalayam, which means our body itself is a temple. Temples have been centres of worship for centuries.

Nearly 40,000 temples in Tamil Nadu, out of which 30,000 are minor 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 and sculpture. Thevaram mentions different 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 one another, but all temples belonging to one type, say Hill temples, have similar structures, sculptures, etc. in general. But all temples had been the learning centres of philosophy of life, religion and intricacies of arts.

Appar in Thevaram mentions that there are seventy-eight temples for lord Siva in addition to six more types of temples namely குருகிருட்போல், மல்கிருட்போல், சாமுகிலிதை, திருக்கிலிதை, மாசிக்கிலிதை, அடன்கிலிதை. The belief is that if one prays to lord Siva in these temples, he is free from the effects of Karma.
CHRONOLOGICAL INFORMATION ABOUT HINDU RELIGIOUS LAWS

Kings, jameens, and mutts did their best in the upkeep of the temples, religion and culture. For example, British Administration in India framed *Charitable Trust Law* to maintain our oriental heritage. Such a law on charitable trusts was not found in the Hindu Religious laws before 1927. This law has empowered executives of charitable trusts to utilise not only the 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 needy. Choultries were run by rich people. Slowly saints started building mutts and temples. Four *Vedic* mutts were installed in the eighth century by *Aadhi Sankara*, to propagate *Advaita* philosophy. Later *Ramanujar* installed his *Dwaitha* mutt. It was followed by *Madhwacharya* who installed a mutt to preach *Visishtadhvaitha* philosophy. Later *Saiva* mutts were developed to propagate the philosophy of *Saivam*. The literary contribution of these mutts through *Thirumarai* and *Divyaprabandham* gave birth to religious literature.
IDOL WORSHIP

From Vedic times to the Buddha 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 sky). Kings, Zamindars and other richer society donated lands, money or food for conducting pujas and festivals in the temples. The day-to-day expenditure is properly audited by the administrators of the king. They scrutinized or audited the expenses.

The Hindu Dharma of believing the "Temples as (presiding) places of Gods" was acknowledged by Muslims. Britishers who were later rulers wanted the temples and charitable trusts to be useful to the society and also felt that it was their duty to protect the religious practices in India.

Pujas are conducted by the priests. Donations are given to the temple.¹ The emergence of festivals is the main cause for the emergence of an administrative system. Administrations of the Navakailasam temples were under the control of mutts. The power of the mutts was transferred to the East India Company in later days. The company gave the administrative power to the Sthalasthar. Administration of the temple was taken over by the Government only in the twentieth century.

¹ Raman K.V., Sri Varatharaja Swami Temple, Delhi, 1975, p.6.
Mutts were entrusted to look after the proper conduct of worship in the temples. There is sufficient evidence from the inscription that from early eleventh century onwards there were institutions known as mutts.²

LAWS AND AMENDMENTS ON HINDU RELIGIOUS ENDOWMENT AND CHARITABLE TRUSTS

The first law passed by the British rulers was Regulating Acts. Regulation No. 10/1810 in the year 1810 in Bengal, Regulation No.7/1817 in Madras and later in Bombay in the year 1827 were passed. During this period Muslims who were ruling in certain areas gave liberal donations to Hindu temples. The British protected the mosques in the areas under their rule. This helped them to continue their business trade in India. This also was helpful to form an opinion that Britishers respected "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/mosques in villages and cities. Indirectly British rulers were watching the supervisors of Hindu temples and mosques. This was the way that the temples were protected during the period 1817 to 1842.³

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During the period of 1839 to 1842 (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 Britain wrote a letter to the then Governor General of British India, to withdraw their powers to govern and supervise the Hindu temples and to handover the same to the public leaders who had faith in Hindu religion on 10th August 1840. Accordingly, the temple administration was handed over to local bodies with two conditions. (1) The farmers working in the lands of temples must be protected. (2) The revenue collected from the temples and trusts during British period upto 1840 would be with the British government in India. In case of excess 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 better transportation etc. The government did not hand over the power to the local trustees and local heads of mutts and temples.

Indirectly, the income of charitable trusts and temples was taken by the British government, which reflects that they had no faith on local trustees. The following changes were introduced in temple administration: (a) small temples were handed over to pujaris. (b) temples with moderate income were handed over to a committee consisting of a village officer and

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a religious minded popular person of the village. (c) the government respected the religious practices adopted in the bigger temples and accepted the administrators by heritage, and (d) special attention was given to *Devasthanams* of Thiruppathy, Kancheepuram Varadaraja Perumal, Thiruvallur, Sriperumpudur, Thiruvannamalai, Sirengam, and Trichy 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, the British government withdrew direct control of temples. During this period, there prevails inefficient administration, mismanagement of accounts, mishandling / swindling of money from trusts, domination by richer and powerful class etc, forced the government to delete regulation No. 7/1817 and enforce 20th 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 the 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 the decentralised administration. Bills named Karmichell Bill, Challiven's bill and Muthusamy Iyers Bill were prepared. Chief Justice Muthusamy Iyer's bill was the first one passed in 1919 by Legislative Council of Madras. This bill was common to Hindus and Muslims later in the year 1923. Hindu Religious Endowment Act was passed especially for the administration of Hindu temples. All the accounts of Hindu temples and trusts were audited and came under the direct control of the government. Thus, a central board for each state was formed to control the district boards, local boards, and local committees. An indirect control and scrutinisation were introduced.

An amendment for the Hindu Religious Endowment Act was passed in 1925. 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 enacted in August, 1927, which was in force till 1951. As per the act of 1921, Hindu Religious Endowment Board was made autonomous. This Board was given powers to appoint five commissioners; one of them was the President of the board. The temples under the jurisdiction of each commissioner were well defined. The commissioners were given powers to act as judges in specified areas. Each Taluk had a committee to appoint executive officers and additional commissioners. Assistant Commissioners were given
powers to define and develop the temple properties. If there was any grievance with regard to the properties of temples, the leased lands of the temples could not be owned by the lessee as per the law of 1927. The law of 1927 permitted Harijans to enter the temple and abolished Devadasi system. The 1927 law prohibited individuals from enjoying the income from trusts and temples. It was in force 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.\(^5\)

The British handled the temples and trusts carefully with due regard to religious values. They never disrespected our heritage or culture or religious preachings. Many British officers have donated cash and kind to Hindu temples. It deserves to be appreciated the way in which they administered temples and trusts and framed laws and amendments.

**SALARY**

For recognised temple servants, after the regularisation is declared, as per the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowment Commissioner’s order, time scale of pay is to be fixed. As far as the temple staff is

\(^5\) Chandra Mudaliar C., op.cit., p.303.
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 major source of income is obtained from the collections of Hundi. The income due to the auction of the fertile and barren lands is the secondary source of income. Besides, the auction of the vehicle's stand and chappal stand is also considered as tertiary source of income. Above all, the collection in respect of tickets for the entrance into the Ardhamandapa is also taken as an auxiliary 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.

THE ECONOMY OF THE TEMPLE

As the temple is a common institution for both the rulers and the ruled, all the people irrespective of caste, creed, or colour involved themselves in the activities of the temple. They donated either land or money or animals and supplied the required commodities according to their ability. This temple was maintained by royal patronage and public benefactions. Pious devotees made lavish endowments both in kind and
cash either to attain spiritual merit, to atone for their sins or to get success in a war or as part of their fulfilment of certain vows. Large donations were made perhaps to popularize the fame of an individual or the power of the ruler. The sources of income of the temple included among other things, villages, lands, tax-exemptions and reductions by the authorities, gifts in the form of livestock, cash, gold and different articles, rents, fines and from other miscellaneous sources. Besides these, donations to the temple indicated their devotion and dedication to their gods and their loyalty to their kings.

ROYAL CONTROL OVER THE TEMPLE

The presence of the king’s representative in Navakailasam temples both in the Chola and Pandya times, possibly acted as a check over the trustees. But it is well known that even in medieval times, the Government did not interfere with the internal affairs of the temple. The general policy of the Hindu monarchs to the religious institutions was one of the non-interferences. They protected and maintained the institutions by their liberal grants and did not undertake the actual management of them or interference. Internal administration was largely left to their own controlling bodies. But there was a general supervision by the local

officers of the king who were responsible for maintaining law and order. If the king or his officer did interfere, it was rarely and in order to correct some local error or irregularity or to arbitrate in a dispute and this was never taken a miss. The temple lands and properties were subject to the usual taxation and other regulations, unless explicitly exempted.

ELECTION OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS

As far as the Navakailasam temples are concerned, the temples are administered by Executive officers Grade III under temple act 46 (II). The trustees are elected by District Election Committee 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 trustees exceeds more than three, two more trustees are appointed 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 by rotation method.