CHAPTER VI

Temple and Society
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TEMPLE AND SOCIETY

All major temples are immediately surrounded by streets invariably occupied by the priestly class. Thus, the Saiva Brahmins lived in the immediate neighbourhood of Kailasanathar temples. Communal settlements were indeed the order of the day in the ancient and medieval times. Only in the recent decades some changes have occurred towards a free mixing of the communities in the residential quarters.

The Brahmin villages were known as the Brahmadeyas. A Brahmadeya in medieval South India referred to the village, where the rights of cultivation as well as supervision and control of lands were bestowed on the Brahmin beneficiaries by the donor who wished the donees to lead a religious life performing the rites and ceremonies of the temples. At the close of the tenth century A.D., Cheranmahadevi was named after a Chera princess called Vanavan Mahadevi.¹ The earliest inscription found here belongs to Raja Raja dated 1000 A.D. which mentions this place as Cheravan Mahadevi Chaturvedimangalam, a brahmadeya in Mullinadu of Raja Raja Valanadu.² Raja Raja Chola’s 27th regnal year (1012 A.D) inscription found on the south wall of the

². A.R.I.E., 1895 No.182; Balasubramanian S.R., Middle Chola Temples, Haryana, 1975, p.191.
Ammainathar Samy temple referred and renamed Chermadevi as Nigarili Chola Chaturvedimangalam, a Brahmadeya in Mulli Nadu.\textsuperscript{3} Jatavarman alias Tribhuvana Chakravarti Srivallabha's 12th regnal year (1114 A.D) inscription found on the western wall of the central shrine in the Kailasanathar temple at Chendamangalam, referred to Chendamangalam as Chendamangalam of Arrura Brahmadeya in Kudanadu.

When the second Pandyan empire was under consolidation around 1150 A.D, the name of the town was again changed and was called as Cheranmahadevi Chaturvedimangalam.

The Aganaligai Siva Brahmanas of the Cholendra Singa Eswara temple received twelve old 'Kasu' to burn perpetual lamp in the temple.\textsuperscript{4} In the 9th regnal year inscription (1190-1218 AD) of Jatavarman Kulasekara Deva found on the north, west and south walls of the Kulasekara vimanas, Alwar referred Kodaganallur as Kulasekara Chaturvedimangalam in Mela Vembunadu.\textsuperscript{5} Virapandya Deva I (1268-1281 A.D) 3rd regnal (1178) year inscription found on the south wall of the central shrine of Kailasanathar temple at Senkani alias Venkatanathapuram states that, the Sivabrahmanas of the temple of Kodaivana Irvaram Nayanar agreed to burn a lamp for the

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{3} A.R.I.E., 1895, No.183.  
\textsuperscript{5} A.R.I.E., 1932-1933, No. 204 .}
money deposit with them by one Atreyan Peranmar Vili Immaitaruvan.\textsuperscript{6} Another inscription found on the west and south wall of the central shrine states that during the time of Maravarma Kulasekara Pandian Konerimeikondan (1268-1311) Sangani was called as Sivakamasundari Chaturvedimangalam.\textsuperscript{7}

Virapandya Deva I's, 15th regnal year (1268 A.D) inscription found on the northern wall of the mandapa in front of the central shrine mentioned Srivaikuntam as Rajendra Chaturvedimangalam.\textsuperscript{8} Jatavarman alias Tribhuvana Chakravarti Kulasekaradeva's 11th regnal year (1287 A.D) inscription found on the eastern wall of the mandapa in front of the central shrine mentions Thenthirupperai as Soundara Pandya Chaturvedimangalam in Thiruvaluthivalanadu.

Though the Brahmins formed a sizeable bulk of the population, there were people belonging to other communities who had landed property and who also had lively interest in the temples. From the inscriptions of the temples, it is gathered that many of the non-brahmin residents too rendered numerous services to the temples. The Vellala residents looked after the temple lands and cultivation. The Vaishyas who were engaged in trade,

\textsuperscript{6} A.R.I.E., 1944-1945, No. 54.
\textsuperscript{7} Ibid., 1944-1945, No. 55.
\textsuperscript{8} Ibid., 1895, No. 174.
small and big have made enormous endowments to the temples. The *Dasa Nambis* were in charge of the flower gardens of the temples.  

The *Manradis* or the shepherd class maintained the cattle donated to the temples and supplied ghee, butter, curd, etc to the temples. Besides these, there were many professional and artisan class like the stone masons, carpenters, metal workers, umbrella makers, pipers, musicians and dancers lived at *Navakailasam* and served in the temples. In the fourth regnal year of Parakirama Chola Pandya Deva (1050 AD), Yoga Deva and Sama Deva of Kashmir granted twelve *Kasu* to the Ammainatharsamy temple for burning perpetual lamp.  

SAIVA BRAHMINS  

Due to the impact of *Bakthi* movement, the importance of the temple and service to the deity assumed new dimensions. The *Saiva* Brahmins were engaged as priests in the *Navakailasam* temples in reciting the sacred hymns in front of the deity, some in assisting priest, some in bringing water for the oblutions and some in cooking the food for consecration. In short, at least a male adult of every *Saiva* house did some service in the temples. Even now many *Saiva* Brahmins who had left *Navakailasam* seeking employment in other cities make it a point to be present in *Navakailasam*.

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during the annual and other important festivals and take pleasure in rendering some voluntary service to the temples. The importance given to the conception of personal God imparts a spirit of local patriotism. Lord Kailasanathar of Navakailasam is unsurpassable in beauty and compassion.

In the third regnal year (1015 A.D) of Rajendra Chola, Chovatti, a Brahmin lady of Nigarili Chola Chaturvedimangalam donated cash to the Ammainatharsamy temple for maintaining a lamp.\(^{11}\) In the fourth regnal year of Rajendra Chola (1016 A.D) a Brahmin lady of Nigarili Chola Chaturvedimangalam donated six Kasu to the Ammainatharsamy temple for burning a half lamp.\(^{12}\) In the 12th regnal year (1033 AD) of Jatavarman alias Sundara Chola Pandya Deva, Sri Kantha Damodara Bhattan granted thirty-six Kasu to the Ammainatharsamy temple for the construction of Thiruchutrumandapa and burning a perpetual lamp.\(^{13}\) In the twenty-first regnal year of Vikrama Chola Pandya Deva, 1066 A.D, a Brahmin lady of Ninrayill belonged to Kaundinya gotra granted twenty-five cows to the Ammainatharsamy temple for burning a lamp in the temple.\(^{14}\)

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13. Ibid., 1916-1917, No. 621.
In the fifth regnal year of Pandyan Jatavarman Sri Vallabha (1097 AD) Setuvudaiyar (a Brahmin lady), wife of Kuppai Nambi of Cheranmahadevi granted fifty sheeps for burning perpetual lamp in the Ammainathar temple. The sheeps were sold to certain individuals for 90 diramam. They agreed to supply one ulakku of ghee daily for burning a standing lamp of brass called as tarakuttuvilakku. In the 15th regnal year (1205 AD) of Kulasekara Deva I, a Brahmin lady of Manai Nilai Nallur Chaturvedimangalam granted one achchu to the Ammainatharsamy temples at Tuvaravadi in Cheranmahadevi Chaturvedimangalam.

In the 3rd regnal year of (1178 AD) Jatavarman Vira Pandya I, Siva Brahmins of the temple of Kodaivanavisvaram Nayanar of Sengani alias Venkatanathapuram agreed to maintain a lamp for the money deposited with them by one Athreyan. As per the royal order of King Jatavarma Virapandyan, tax free lands were offered to the Lord Kailasanathar temple of Sengani.

In the 15th regnal year of Virapandya Deva I, (1268 A.D) Mahasabha of Srivaikuntam alias Rajendra Chaturvedimangalam in Thiruvaluthi Valanadu granted a land to Anantha Siva Panditha, son of

15. Ibid., 1916-1917, No. 641.
17. Ibid., 1944-1945, No. 54.
18. Ibid., 1944-1945, No. 55.
Somanatha Panditha of Svati grama in Uttaradesa. In the same year, Suryadevan Srivallabha, son of the Savarna Surya of Kasyapagotram hailing from Tandankottam granted a land for the worship and services to Alagandar in Srikailasanathar temple at Srivaikuntam.

In the 11th regnal year of Jatavarman Sundara Pandya II, (1287 A.D) Ilam Barattu Pillai, a Saiva Brahmin of Kailasanathar temple of Thenthirupperai granted money to the temple to burn twelve lamps daily before the deity.

In the 27th regnal year of Raja Raja I, (1012 A.D) Aganaligai Siva Brahmins of Ammainatharsamy temples received twelve old Kasu to burn a perpetual lamp in the temple.

OTHER CLASSES

In 1012 A.D. Vellai Vadugapungai Chettiar granted land to the Ammainatharsamy temple for maintaining two lamps in the temple.

There are a number of non-brahmin Saivites and Non-Brahmin Sri Vaishnava inhabitants at Navakailasam, viz; Vellalars, Yadavas, Vaishyas, Naidus, Sourashtiras, Kammalars and other people reside in and around

20. Ibid., 1895, No. 15.
21. Ibid., 1940-1941, No. 286.
22. Ibid., 1916-1917, No. 629.
23. Ibid., 1916-1917, No. 711.
Navakailasam temples. In the third regnal year of Rajendra Chola I (1015 AD) Kadan Chendan, a Vellala of Nigarili Chola Chaturvedimangalam donated cash to the Vaikanasha of Ammainatharsamy temple for maintaining perpetual lamp.24

There seems to have been a sizeable number of the Vaishyas who were mostly traders. They were variously called as Vaniyan, Nagarathar, Sankara Pandiar, oil monger, and Vaniya Chettiars, reputed as principal merchants. They had their business in different parts of South India. They contributed liberal endowments for the various offerings to the Kailasanathar temples. They are found mostly in Chettiar streets. They reside there permanently from time immemorial. Their chief avocation is the production of gingelly oil and coconut oil. They put raw gingelly seeds in the stone crusher, pulled by two bullocks drawn around it tied to a wooden yoke comes around about till essence from gingelly seeds come out as liquid known as gingelly oil, which is supplied to the Navakailasam temples for anointing idols in the temples, etc. Similarly putting coconuts’ raw shells in the stone crusher would give coconut oil. This coconut oil is also supplied to the temples to make vadai, murukku, athirasam and similar eatables offered to idol in the temples at pujas as Neivedhyam and some portion distributed to the devotees and some are sold. From gingelly

seeds after taking out oil, the stiff are supplied to the temple especially at the *Thiruvathirai* festival. These merchants lived as a group of family known as *Karai*. They remitted taxes known as *antharayam* to the temples. In the 16th regnal year of *Rajendra Chola* I, (1018 AD) by the order of the king, assembly of *Nigarili Chola Chaturvedimangalam* (Cheranmahadevi) granted hereditary *Karanmai* right over a *Devadhana* tank to the merchant *Manneerkadan* alias Thiruneelakanta chetty of the *Nagaram Rajendra Cholapuram*. In response to the above grant, Thiruneelakanta Chetty agreed to pay 2 Kasu to the *Kailasamudayar* as *Ulavu kasu* on each 'veli' of land of the above tank.\(^{25}\)

In the fifth regnal year of Maravarma Sundara Pandya I, (1221 AD) a royal order was issued to the remission of the *Kallamudaipera* and other taxes due to the king from the oil mongers in charge of oil mills meant for the perpetual lamps in the temple of *Kulasekara Vinnagar Emperuman* alias *Kailasanathar* at *Kodanur* alias *Kulasekara Chaturvedimangalam* as *Thirunanda Vilakkul agham*.\(^{26}\)

In the 11th regnal year of Maravarma Sundara Pandya (1227 A.D) *Korran Kunichan*, a merchant of *Elumettur* granted money to the *Siva*...

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Brahmins of *Kailasanathar* temple of Chernthapoomangalam for burning a perpetual lamp.\(^{27}\)

**DASANAMBIS**

They were an important class of Non-Brahmin *Saivites*. They looked after the gardens of the temples and were responsible for the supply of garlands and flowers to the temples. They had a respectable place in the temples and were known for their dedicated service; often they were exempted from paying taxes for the lands under cultivation. During the fourth regnal year (1220 AD) of Maravarma Sundara Pandyan, Appan Narayanan endowed land to the Kailasanathar temple of Chernthapoomangalam for a flower garden to the temple.\(^{28}\)

**COW HERDS**

The cow herds formed an important section of the population whose services were essential. In the early Tamil literature, their settlements were called as *ayarpadi*. They had long tradition of tending cattle and supplying milk, ghee, curd and other milk products to the residents of the villages and towns. The families of the cowherds today have their residents in the yadavar streets. Some of the earlier and later records of *Navakailasam* temples refer to numerous gifts of sheep, cow and

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buffalo for the supply of curd and ghee to the temples. Temples, the large consumer of milk and ghee, encouraged the cattle rearing and dairy farming by having large contingent of cowherds to protect the cattle.

In the fourth regnal year of Jatavarman Kulasekara Deva (1194 A.D), a dancing girl granted 50 sheeps to the Ammainatharsamy temple for a lamp and a lamp stand.29 In the fifth regnal year of Jatavarman Srivallabha (1097 AD) Chendan Chittan granted 50 sheeps to the Ammainatharsamy temple for burning perpetual lamp. Kari Chattan alias Nigarili Chola agreed to supply ghee for burning the lamp.30 In the 20th regnal year, Sundara Chola Pandya Deva (1041 AD), granted 50 sheeps to the Ammainatharsamy temple for burning a lamp.31 In the 23rd regnal year of Raja Raja I (1008 AD), a villager of Idaiyarru mangalam granted sheep for a lamp to the Ammainatharsamy temple.32 In the 25th regnal year of (1070 AD) Vikrama Chola Pandya Deva, a shepherd of the Nigarili Chola Chaturvedimangalam granted twenty-five sheeps to the Ammainatharsamy temple for burning lamp.33

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29. Ibid., 1916-1917, No. 632.
30. Ibid., 1916-1917, No. 644.
31. Ibid., 1916-1917, No. 625.
32. Ibid., 1916-1917, No. 626.
33. Ibid., 1916-1917, No. 616.
COURTESANS

Like many leading temples of South India, *Navakailasam* temples had this unique class of lady servants who were called as *Devaradiyars* and dedicated themselves to the temple service. They were also called as *Devadasis*. Their main duties were to sing and dance in front of the Gods at specified times daily and accompany the deity in procession. Their public appearances were usually associated with religious festivals and they were generally experts in music and dance. The *Devadasis* were in employment in *Navakailasam* temples enjoying landed property and steady remuneration in cash and kind. In the fourth regnal year of Jatavarman Kulasekara Deva (1194 AD), a dancing girl of *Thiruvidai Kottamudiyar Mahadevar* temple at Kunnathoor in *Kilvembu Nadu* granted 25 sheeps to the Ammainatharsamy temple for burning a half lamp.\(^{34}\)

TEMPLE AS A PATRON OF MUSIC AND ARTS

During the festivals, musicians rendered classical songs in front of the deity both inside the temple and at car streets at procession. Playing on the *Nadaswaram* with its accompaniments is considered to be auspicious and so it is played in the temple during the early morning and also during other day-to-day pujas, functions and festivals. The artisans considered it

\(^{34}\) Ibid., 1916-1917, No. 631.
as a privilege and honour to sing in front of the deity both inside the temple and at the procession of *Urchavar* in car streets.

In the temples, religious discourses by eminent scholars are conducted very often. Musical instruments displayed an art to make people to achieve sense of pleasure. By all these, *Navakailasam* temples are supporting various artisans and give lessons of good morals to people and arouse religious feelings. In the 16th regnal year of (1205 sep.19) Kulasekhara I, Nara Kanga Vachiya Marayan belonged to the *Kaikolar* community granted money to the Ammainathar temple for conducting offerings and worship.  

**TEMPLE AS A PART AND PARCEL OF LIFE**

From the days of yore, temples played a vital role in the day-to-day life of the human beings. Temples not only expressed religious fervour among the people but also acted as a learning centre for art, Folk-lore, culture, language, literature, religion, politics, economics and above all acted as an educational institution. In those days immediately after harvest, food grains are stored inside the temple. A separate granary is used for this purpose. Hence, the temple performed the duty of a granary also. The *Navakailasam* temples also have a cordial relationship with the people lived in and around the temple areas. *Navakailasam* temples were the

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35. Ibid., 1916-1917, No 633
centres of learning and education. Mutts or monasteries in the vicinity of Navakailasam temples served as theological seminaries and schools.

The following choultries and mutts are situated in the vicinity of the Papanasam temple:

1. Pannai Sivanu Pandian Chatram
2. Kallidaikurichi Iyer Chatram
3. Vizha Puja mandapa
4. Esana Madam
5. Chenkol Madam
6. Agasthiar Ashramam
7. Tharumapura Atheena Madam
8. Kannappar Madam
9. Veeravanallur Adaviar Madam
10. Pillayan Madam
11. Mettu Madam
12. Pothigai vilasam
13. Chenkuntha Mudaliar Madam
14. Valaiyanantha Paradesi Madam
15. Saiva Chettiar Madam
16. Chenai Kulathar Madam
17. Illathar Madam
18. Pandi Vannar Madam
19. Pattu Noolkarar Madam
The mutts, monastries and choultries acted as socio-cultural institutions at Papanasam and helped a lot to the people in and around the place.\(^36\)

Feeding poor and the deserving persons on the occasion of feasts and festivals, marriages and other ceremonies were considered as an act of piety and charity. As rest house for the travellers and visitors form in a pilgrimage centre like Navakailasam are quite obvious. In early days, the temples themselves served as the agency to carry on the charity on account of the sanctity attached to them. It was easy for arranging to distribute a portion of the offered food freely among the devotees and also the local people who took part in some service. At Srivaikuntam Sri Kailasanathar temple, meals are provided daily for two persons. At 11.00 A.M, curd mixed rice is distributed daily to the devotees as prasadam. Some portions

\(^{36}\) பாப்பானேஸ்வரம் கோவில்களின் கல்லூரிகள் (நூற்றாண்டு விளக்கம்) 1991.
of the temple prasadams are sold to public as an earning to the funds of the temples. Jobs are provided to carpenters and similar artisans required for the temple. The temples employed persons as cooks and similar labourers, which helped them to earn their livelihood.

THE TEMPLE AS A LAND OWNER

Land, the immovable property, appeared to be the primary wealth of the temples. The accumulation of land was mostly by donations from the rulers and private individuals. The land donations made over to the temple was lauded as the best dana greater than another gift. Navakailasam temples have huge properties as devadanams. These properties are in the name of deity. But Government controls the lands, buildings and ornaments of the Navakailasam temples. Agriculture was the basic occupation, on which the vast majority of the population depended for livelihood. The temples were the biggest landowners and filled a large place in the agricultural economy of the locality.

GARDENS

A number of fruits and flower gardens were gifted by the individuals to the Navakailasam temples to meet the need for flowers and fruits for the daily worship as well as during festivals. In the fourth regnal year of

Maravarma Sundara Pandya I (1220 AD), *Appan Narayanan* endowed land to the *Kailasanathar* temple of Chernthapoomangalam to maintain a flower garden in the temple.³⁸

**COINS**

The inscriptions of *Navakailasam* temples furnish with interesting information regarding the coins that were current at various times. The gold coins were issued by many chola and later pandya kings. The *pon* was the standard gold *kasu* of the realm, which was equal to one *kalanju* or 70 grams of gold.³⁹

**TEMPLE AS A CONSUMER**

As an institution requiring a variety of commodities and services for its day-to-day conduct as well as on special festive occasions, the temples were the biggest consumers of the locality. In the early stages, the requirements of the temple were probably few. Flowers, sandal, milk, ghee and oil for lamp, etc were only required by the temples for offerings. The steady increase in the offerings due to festivals and rituals from about 13th century A.D. resulted in the increase of the articles received by the temples. The items constantly required by the temples were rice, gram, pulses, turmeric, pepper, mustard, jaggery, salt, betel, camphor, *kumkum*,

³⁹ Ibid., 1916-1917, No. 629.
coconut, fruits, milk, ghee, butter, curd, oil and honey. Not only the eatables and perfumes but also other articles like cloth, silver and brass metal lamps, decorative articles and the like are received by the temple authorities. The temples still continue to be the biggest consumer. In this way, the temple stimulated and encouraged local trade and industry.

From the foregoing accounts, it is seen that Navakailasam temples filled a large place in the social and economic life of the people of Papanasam, Cheranmahadevi, Kodaganallur, Kunnathoor (Sangani), Murappanadu, Srivaikuntam, Thenthirupperai, Rajapathi, and Chernthapoomangalam.

Till 1937, depressed class people were not allowed to enter into the temples. In 1937-38, Rajaji Ministry of Tamil Nadu passed the temple Entry Authorisation Act. The Act allows the depressed class people to enter into the temples. K.T.Kosalram of Arumuganeri opposed the conditions of this act. In July 1939, under the leadership of K.T.Kosalram, the depressed class people of Chernthapoomangalam, Thenthirupperai and Srivaikuntam entered into the Navakailasam temples without any opposition. It was considered as a boon to the depressed class people.
ROLE OF THIRUVAVADUTHURAI ATHEENAM

The thiruvavaduthurai atheenam offered a lot for the daily pujas of Sri Kailasanathar temples in Papanasam, Thenthirupperai, Murappanadu and Srivaikuntam.40

40. Letter received from the Thiruvavaduthurai Atheenam dt. 11 August 2005 (Appendix A).