CHAPTER - 6

SOCIAL IMPACT

Introduction

_Mutts_ and temples had been built as religious institutions by kings and rich landlords. The chief aim of building such institutions was to propagate religious ideas through philanthropic activities. Most of the _Mutts_ worked more obviously for religious purposes than for welfare oriented purposes. But the Kunrakudi _Mutt_ stood as an exception in this regard. Unlike most of the traditional _Mutts_, the Kunrakudi _Mutt_ initiated social welfare activities for the Kunrakudi Village. In an under developed country like India the rural areas still remain socially backward. They need support not only from the Government but also from Non-Governmental organisations. In this connection the services rendered by the Kunrakudi _Mutt_ to the rural society became remarkable achievements. The social impact of the _Mutt_ on Kunrakudi village could be seen through the various religious and secular activities.

The _Mutt_ obviously a traditional religious organisation of Hindu society wielded enormous influence and enjoyed excellent support from the people of Kunrakudi for its social
awareness. It was due to the efforts taken by Adigalar and he made the *Mutt* popular by its social work and social orientation.

**The Social Condition of Kunrakudi Village**

A Society is nothing but a collection of individuals who have different attitudes, tastes and fashions, but still they have a common way of life. The literature serve as a mirror that reflect the contemporary social conditions of any society. India is a land of villages. India’s development was based upon improvement of her villages. Villages are the backbone of the Indian economy.

In India, historical evidences of the past and the present indicate the fact that religions have made a thorough sway of the social life of the people. Religion sprawls in India. Kunrakudi is no exception to this. Christians, Muslims and Hindus have permanent residence in Kunrakudi. However the Hindus form the majority. Kunrakudi has an impeccable record of religious harmony through the decades since independence. In the vicinity of Kunrakudi there is neither a church nor a mosque. Kunrakudi village, like any other village in Tamil Nadu, is proud of many temples. Shanmuganathan temple dedicated to Lord Muruga, the most venerated deity of the Tamils is the most popular of the some small temple in the village.
Every temple of Kunrakudi is maintained and regulated by the *Mutt*. Hindu Temples are thrown open to all. The income and expenditure including the assets of the temple are under the administrative control of the *Mutt*.

**Promotion of Public Amenities**

The *Mutt* took interest in the recreation of children and elders by providing public gardens or park in the centre of the Kunrakudi village. Two parks that served as the place of relaxation and recreation were named after two freedom fighters name by V.O.Chidambaram Pillai¹ and K.Kamaraj Nadar.² The *Mutt* had taken care of the maintenance and upkeeping of the park. It provided the reading room with books, news papers, periodicals and television.

V.O.Chidambaram Pillai: (A.D. 1872 – A.D. 1936)

An advocate of Tuticorin, He was a great Tamil scholar who also edited the Tolkappiam, with Ilampooranar commentary. He was one of the freedom fighters in Tamil Nadu. He collected money and started a swadeshi steam navigation company which would ply steamers between Tuticorin and cylon competing with already operating British Companies. V.O.Chidambaram was accused of making seditious speeches and organizing terrorist activities and jailed first in Coimbatore and later in Cannanore. His later life was pathetic.

Kamarajar Nadar (A.D.1903 –A.D.1975)

He was a congress leader and freedom fighter. He was chief Minister of Tamil Nadu from 1953 1963. He placed great emphasis on social development, especially education. One of Kamarajars most successful policies was the re-introduction of the “Midday meals” in Tamil Nadu, which encouraged under-privileged children to attend schools. This scheme was helpful to achieve higher literacy rates.
and radio sets. The *Mutt* provided other facilities to encourage indoor and outdoor games.\(^3\)

The *Mutt* evinced keen interest in the conduct of evening classes to the school – going poor children in the park under the green wood tree. In a way the *Mutt* has also organised tree planting. Well-grown 80 neem trees in the park provided elders and children the required shade and shelter. It was the right step towards environmental preservation and protection.

**Nehru Youth Forum**\(^4\)

Members of Nehru Youth forum was functioning very enthusiastically. The forum had celebrated many functions and undertook social works in Kunrakudi. Adigalar was the patron of this forum.

On 24\(^{th}\) January 1993\(^5\) the function relating to horticulture was celebrated, in which fruit saplings and seeds were distributed to the youth free of cost.

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\(^4\) Ibid., pp. 104, 105.

\(^5\) Ibid., pp. 104, 105.
The Nehru Youth Forum celebrated the Pongal day in a grand manner. Many sports events as Cycle race, 1500 meters running race, shot put, three legged race, pot breaking game, and running race were held on the Pongal Day. School children and adults participated in the Pongal Day Celebration.

Republic Day of India was celebrated on every 26th January by the in the Youth forum. Quiz programme was held on that day. Science Quiz programme was conducted on 28th February. Every 28th February was celebrated as the world Science Day.

Free food, free water and free accommodation were given to the Palani Patha Yathra devotees by the Nehru Youth Forum.

Members of the Nehru youth forum played a leading role in the social and developmental activities of the Mutt. The members participated in the “Youth Awareness meeting at Kunrakudi on 19th May 1993. Many scientists of Central Electro Chemical Research Institute (CECRI) participated and emphasised the importance of science. Many debates were held at Kunrakudi Mutt. Adigalar had

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6 Ibid., pp. 104, 105.
7 Ibid., pp. 104, 105.
8 op.cit, 108, 109
9 op.cit, 108, 110
participated in the debates along with the members of the forum. They took out a procession to mark the Nehru Memorial Day, Childrens day and Independence day. Adigalar had participated in the function and procession. Competitions were held among the students on these days. Musical competitions were conducted by the forum. Kabbadi, Ball Badminton, Volley ball matches, field events and tract events were conducted by the forum. Marutha oorani tank was cleaned and deepened by the members of the Forum.\textsuperscript{10}

**Mankayarkarasi Weman’s Forum\textsuperscript{11}**

The forum was founded on 4\textsuperscript{th} April, 1983\textsuperscript{12}. It was registered body. To develop women’s education and status, employment opportunity of women, child care, self employment and to develop corporate life among women and to create awareness in society about the importance of women education, family welfare, small savings this women’s forum was established in Kunrakudi. In the evening hours, the women learnt the art of cooking, house garden

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{10} op.cit, 108, 111
\textsuperscript{11} Mangaryarkarasi (A.D.710 – A.D.765)
Mangaryarkarasi was the Pandian queen, wife of Maravaraman Arikesari Parankusan the Pandian King of Tamil Nadu. She venerated Saiya dailty.
\end{flushleft}
maintenance, house keeping, temple festivals, free tailoring classes etc., Training for making export garments was given in the Forum.

Mangayarkarasiar Children’s Home

The children’s home was started on 1-2-1989\textsuperscript{13}. There were 25 children and two care takers in the home. The Kunrakudi Mutt contributed sum of Rs. 9979/- and the Ministry of Social Welfare, Government of India contributed a sum of Rs. 12615/- on 1992-1993. Adigalar was keenly interested in the children’s home. Articles needed for play way method of teaching were donated by Adigalar.

Puratachi Thalaivar M.G.R.\textsuperscript{14} Noon Meals Centre

It was founded on 1\textsuperscript{st} July, 1982.\textsuperscript{15} There were 17 male children and 18 female children in the centre. Three care takers were appointed. They maintained the centre.

\textsuperscript{13} op.cit., p.110
\textsuperscript{14} M.G.Ramachandran (A.D. 1917 – A.D. 1987)
Maruthur Gopalakrishna Ramachandran Popularly known as MGR was a film actor. He entered the world of cinema and gradually rose to enviable positions by persistent efforts and endurance. He became a great actor, director and producer and the chief Minister of Tamil Nadu after Kalaignar Karunanidhi, the former Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu.
The Noon-meal center is functioning in a pucca building with a clean toilet, surrounded by many trees in the centre. The *Mutt* donated many playing things to the centre.

**V.O.C Memorial Social Educational Centre**

The centre was started on 2\(^{nd}\) October, 1986. Adigalar was the patron of this centre. The Kunrakudi *Mutt* is the caretaker of this centre. The plan for 1993 - 1995 is given below:

**Health education**

Health education like general education was concerned with the change in knowledge, feelings and behaviour of people. Several Seminars and health camps were conducted to improve the capabilities such as speaking, writing, expression of the face and eyes, gestures, listening and observing etc., Kunrakudi *Mutt* and Kunrakudi Adigalar supported the health education to the village people and students. The *Mutt* gave great importance to the environmental sanitation scheme. Chlorination of public water sources at regular intervals.

Educating the community about the methods of disposing liquid wastes, the *Mutt* arranged soakage pits, kitchen gardens,
disposal of solid waste to help the community to construct composite pits or manure pits in the village. The Mutt educated the public for the use of sanitary latrines.

Family Planning schemes were adopted strictly in the Kunrakudi area. The centre spread the message of Family Planning Program. Their slogan was “one child one mother”.

The centre introduced Children's nutrition food scheme. Iron tonic and iron tablets were supplied to the children and pregnant ladies from the centre. The centre advised the people, to prevent the eye diseases, to know the advantages of vitamin tablets, nutritious food, hygienic life and preventive methods.

There were Medical examination programmes on every Thursday, in schools. In addition to that there were Immunisation, Teacher Training, Health and population Education, Healthy school environment, Nutrition programmes etc. These programmes were arranged to give advise to the rural people. To use clean vessels, To use clean, boiled water, use of correct quantity of oral dehydration powder or correct amounts of salt, sugar and lime juice.
Communicable diseases

Cholera, measles etc are called communicable diseases. The centre had given proper ideas and advised the people to safeguard against communicable diseases.

The centre adopted the following methods: Data collection, Analysis of data, action, epidemiological investigation, feed back, Isolation and treatment. The centre advised the people to protect water, drainage schemes and prefer clean dinking water methods.

Leprosy Control centre

A leprosy control centre is functioning in Kunrakudi village. More than 84 patients 3 students and 81 villagers had taken treatment in the centre. Leprosy was controlled in the village.16

Live Stock Service

The Kunrakudi Mutt arranged for a service scheme to the people of Kunrakudi regarding the rearing of cows, bullocks, sheep, lambs, chickens and other domestic animals. Many camps for the up keep of domestic animals were conducted.

16 Ramanathapuram Gazetteer, p.1000.
Sir C.V. Raman Science Forum

Sir C.V. Raman\textsuperscript{17} science forum is functioning for the past twenty years. Kunrakudi village planning forum and Central Electro Chemical Research Institute supported and helped the science forum.

To develop the knowledge of science, the forum involved in environmental study. Conducted science exhibitions, debate, science seminars, Quiz programme and science classes. Kunrakudi Adigalar the head of the \textit{Mutt} took keen interest and supported the Science Forum in all its activities..

Science Forum students passed 100\% in their schools and public examinations. One Police Station is functioning in

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\textsuperscript{17} Sir. C.V. Raman (1888-1970)

Dr. Chandrasekara Venkataraman is one of the most distinguished scientists of 20\textsuperscript{th} century. His discovery known as the Raman Effect made a very distinctive contribution to physics. For his discovery, he was awarded the Nobel prize in Physics in 1930. He was the first Indian scientist and also the first Asian to receive a Nobel prize in physics. This discovery of Raman is significant for one more reason. He studied and conducted his scientific researches living in India where there was the widely shared notion that no great scientific discovery could be made under the then existing scientific facilities in India. He confirmed to carry out different types of experiments and researches on the sun rays passing through water, transparent ice, block and other media.
Kunrakudi. For instance the activities of the science forum is given in the following table.

**Table 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No</th>
<th>Events and Functions</th>
<th>1993-94</th>
<th>1994-95</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Science lectures</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Science Quiz programme</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><strong>Science Exhibition</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Science Educational excursion</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>National Celebration</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Environmental Seminar Education Day</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
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**Temples of Kunrakudi**

Kunrakudi has many temples. However Shanmuganathan temple is the most important and popular temple. The Vinayagar temple is found at the bottom of the peacock shaped ancient hill temple. This hill temple is

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18 Ramanathapuram Gazetteer, p.877.
provided with a flight of stairs for easy ascent on the way. This shrine is adorned with artistic sculptures. The Kunrakudi Mutt is the sole trustee of the Shanmuganathan Temple. The Mutt was the controller of this temple. Area of the temple is 6.75 acres. The temple has occupied the most central place in the Hindu Society.

Maintenance of Temple Tanks

Temples in Tamil Nadu made endowments to maintain tanks and irrigation channels. There are several archaeological evidences of the construction of tanks in ancient and historical India. The construction of tanks conferred religious merit and the construction of a temple tank conferred even greater merit. Many of the sacred tanks were also used for irrigation, particularly to cultivate temple lands. Tamil Nadu, a rain-fed state, is very much dependent on the kulams or temple tanks which were used for providing drinking water, water for washing purposes and the village water level. Nearly every Village in Tamil Nadu village has a temple. The water of the temple tank was used for drinking and religious purposes and sometimes, for irrigating temple lands. Its limited use meant that it

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19 Maru. Paramaguru, Kunrakudi Thala Varalaru, (History of Kunrakudi), Tamil, Piranmalai Temple Head Office, Kunrakudi, 1979, p.3.

20 Sacred Tanks of South India, C.P.R. Environmental Education Centre, Chennai, Unesco, New Delhi, 2002, p.15.
maintained ground water levels, thus ensuring sufficient water in the
domestic wells through the hot summer months. The temple tanks
were to protect the environment and natural resources; sacred
groves to protect local biodiversity. Endowments from devotees
were used by the Mutt to maintain the temple and its tank. House
have been built around the catchments of most tanks; the roads
around the tanks have been cemented and tarred, thus preventing
groundwater from seeping in. Today, sewage flows into the temple
tanks devotees washes their clothes and body with detergent and
soap, thus polluting the water and making it unfit for drinking or for
any other cleansing purpose. The public and the devotees lack civic
sense. The efforts taken by the Mutt to educate them failed to give
the desired results. The Mutt failed miserably in this regards.

There are three sacred tanks in Kunrakudi. They are
Saravana Poigai, Marudhapuri Tank, Melavaiyupuri Tank.\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{21} Saravana Poigai is at the foot of the hill. Water from the hillock drains into this
tank. The quality of the water is good and is used by the villagers for drinking
purposes. The outlet is linked to another sacred tank. The Aadheenam is
maintaining the tank well, keeping it free from pollutants and encroachments.
Marudhapuri tank is on the southern side of the hillock. It was built by the
Marudhu brothers of Sivaganga. People use the water for bathing and
washing and the water from the outlet is let into a nearby coconut farm
belonging to the temple. The Kunrakudi agricultural engineering Department
of the Government of Tamil Nadu, desilted the tank in 1973 and again in 1996.
Melavaiyapuri Tank, Mulaiyur Thandavaray Pillai, Minister of king Rajapuli
Muthu Vaduganathar Periya Udayan, built this tank in 1754 A.D.\textsuperscript{21} the tank is
in good condition. Lilies and lotuses are grown in the tank and used for pooja
purpose.
The Mutt and Celebration of Festivals

Hindus Celebrate many festivals. Festivals have a legendary as well as socio-economic background. Reflection of the strength between virtue and evil could also be seen in the celebration of festivals, though it was an occasion for rejoice and festivities, meeting and mingling.\textsuperscript{22}

Festivals are based on rejoicing, fasting and singing together to celebrate an occasion. Such festivals are celebrated since ancient times all over India. Tamil festivals proclaim the Tamil culture to the rest of the world. In Kunrakudi Village, the Mutt had evinced keen interest in the celebration of Hindu festivals which were basically religious in character. So the involvement of temples and role of the Mutt in the celebration was obvious. Thereby the Mutt spends a lot for the successful conduct of the celebrations. In the occasion of the festival, the Mutt authorities took steps to decorate the temple. The whole religious activity in the village obviously was managed and regulated by the Mutt. The maintenance of the temple and upholding of the Hindu tradition, social customs and habits in the Kunrakudi village became very much an affair of the Mutt. The

\textsuperscript{22} op.cit., p.220.
Mutt spends and receives endowments for the spiritual promotion as well as social welfare of the people of Kunrakudi and others too. It became the custodian of the social and religious life of the village.

The Mutt It aimed at an integrated social life to foster a healthy and peaceful society. The following festivals are celebrated in Kunrakudi. They are: Tamil New year day, Agninakshatra festival, Visaka festival, Anna Abhisheka festival, Adi Padinettamperukku, Adi Puram, Adilaksharchana festivals, Vinayaka Chaturti, Navarathri festival, Kantha shasti festival, Thirukarthikai festival, Dhanur masa festival, Thai Pusam festival, Maha Sivarathri Festival and Panguni Uthiram festival.

The jubilant festivals such as – Tamil New Year Day, Agni Natchatra Festival, Vaikasi Visaka Festival, Adipuram, Adi-Pathinettam Perukku, Vinayaka Chathurti, Kandha Shasti, Shastivrata, Thirukkarthigai Festival, Thai Poosam, Panguni Uthiram, Kavadiattam etc., have got telling effect on the socio-economic life of the people of Kunrakudi Village. It is further evident from the facts that these festivals are useful as important sources of
trade and employment opportunities and regular source of revenue for the *Mutt*.

Festivals and temples served as a means of relaxation from the hectic and painful bread-winning activities of the common man. Thus the religious activities of the Kuntrakudi *Mutt* have made remarkable social impact upon the society.

The Shanmuganatha Temple of Kuntrakudi 57.86 acres lands and 209.58\(^{23}\) acres of dry lands were in the villages of Kuntrakudi. The temple also owns lands in O.Siruvayal, Namam, Palavankudi, Aripuram, K.Athankudi and Sali of Thirupathru Taluk, Sivaganga District.

The total revenue of the Kuntrakudi Shanmuganathan temple for the year 1978 was Rs.455474/- of which land revenue amounted to Rs.133929/-, rent from shops Rs.8128/-, revenue from Lease Rs.96512/-, and fees for Archanai Rs.217005\(^{24}\)
Shanmuganathan Temple

From the funds of the temple accrued through offerings, entrance fees, and archana, abhisheka tickets the temple spends a considerable amount for the welfare of the society.

Tamil New year day (Chithirai)  The first month of Tamil year

Every year the first day of the Tamil month of Chithirai (April 14)\textsuperscript{25} is celebrated as Tamil New Year Day. It is a custom in and around Kunrakudi to offer worship to Lord Shanmuganathan early in the morning on this day. It is also believed that the presiding deity of the temple Lord Shanmuganathan would shower his grace and blessings throughout the year.

The hill temple of Kunrakudi is kept opened early in the morning at 4 a.m. A special feature of this day is the ‘Padi Patham Festival’ or worshipping the steps of the hill. Another important feature of this day is the offering of varieties of cereals to Lord Muruga as a mark of thanks giving for the good harvest.

\textsuperscript{25} Maru. Paramaguru, Kunrakudi Thalavaralaru,  (History of Kunrakudi), Tamil, Piranmalai Temple Head Office, Kunrakudi, 1979, p.p. 35, 36.
Agni Nakshatra Festival (Chithrai – Vaikasi)

Agni Nakshatra festival is celebrated for fourteen days in Kunrakudi. It starts from the 23rd day of the Chithrai and concludes with the 7th day of Vaikasi. This period is the hottest part of the year. During these fourteen days devotees go round the Kunrakudi hill in the car street as much out of faith as for reasons of health in the early morning and evening in large numbers. This activity of going round the hill is called “Valam Varutal” in Tamil.

During the Agni Nakshatra festival people from nearby villages of Kunrakudi also come to Kunrakudi and go round the temple, singing devotional songs with folk musical instruments both in the morning and evening. After this they offer worship to Lord Shanmuganathan at the hill. Devotees from far and near places come and stay in the choultries and Mutts established by their

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26 The term is used to denote the purpose of walking round objects or persons for the custom of influencing or honoring them. The custom is observed, with a religious or magical signification. In the religious and social life of the Tamils, the belief in “Valam Varutal” is of greater significance. Whenever they enter into any auspicious social or religious activity, they place their right leg at first. According to them the placing of right leg at first signifies victory. This practice is found in marriages, gragapravesam (house warming ceremony) and entering into the temples, thus Valam Paduthal (falling on right side) and Valam Varutatal (going round) denote their belief in future victories.

The purpose of going round the temple is generally considered to ward off sins.
respective castes. Various types of Kavadies\textsuperscript{27} are brought with cold water for the \textit{abhisheka} of the Lord accompanied by various folk dances during this festival. The bearer of the khavadi and their group sing devotional songs called \textit{kavadippatu}. The procession is usually accompanied by drum, dances and other instrumental music. Folk dances like \textit{Karakattam},\textsuperscript{28} \textit{Kavadi Attam, Kummi Attam} also find a place in their procession.

The Agni Nakshatra festival remind us of nature worship. In ancient days the Tamils worshiped gods in natural objects. To them

\textsuperscript{27} Kavadi is a semi circular wooden frame bedecked with divine offerings and uttering – ‘Arohoara’ (Chorus song and slogans) loudly as they pass the temple. Devotees go round the temple, they see invariably groups of people in saffron robes, each bearing on shoulders. This ritual is performed in pursuance of vows taken by the devotees and it marks their redemption, of offering several poojas. Normally, the devotees come from distant places, walking all the way to the accompaniment of musical instruments and singing of hymns.

\textsuperscript{28} Karagattam, for example, was an outward expression of their inward joy for having saved them from a calamity or an epidemic that had held sway over the whole neighbourhood doing away with number of helpless people. It a religious dance performed by the folks to propitiate the mother-goddess for having saved them from such as calamity. Karagam was an earthen or bronze pot decorated with flowers and margosa leaves which to the folk were of great medicinal value. During festivals the Karakattakar (the dancer) to ward off evil effects at all kinds would hold bunches of margosa leaves which were deemed to be a panacea to save them from all diseases like smallpox and dance to the accompaniment of local melam. (music instrument). Likewise, they would decorate the temple with margosa leaves in order to make it sacred and germ free.

After the initial performance at the temple, the Karakattakar (the dancer) would go round the village in procession to accept the ceremonial welcome that would await them at the entrance of the village. On their arrival, the folk, who would be waiting with potful of water, would pour it at their feet to reduce the heat due to scorching sun and prostrate at their feet with utmost devotion. To respect such representatives of the Goddess Mariamma, devotees would break coconuts, burn camphor and offer “arati” which normally was meant for gods and goddess.
every object of nature was a representation of the divine power. It was evident from *Thirumurugatrupadai* and *Kalithokai*. The Kunrakudi hill is situated in a natural setting. During the festival the kadamba trees (Engenia Racemosa) favourite flower of Muruga were in full bloom part of the village more over the women folk wear the Kadamba flowers on their head.

**Visaka Festival (Vaikasi) in Kunrakudi**

The visaka festival, known as *Vasantotsava* is celebrated during the month of *Vaikasi*\(^\text{29}\) at Kunrakudi Shanmuganathan Temple. Visaka is the birth star of Murugan. The festival is conducted on par with the other two mahotsavas namely Thaipusam and Panguni Uthiram.

**Adi Puram Festivals (Adi) in Kunrakudi**

*Adilaksharachana, Adi Pathinettam Perukku* and *Adi Puram* are the three important festivals celebrated in Kunrakudi during the

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\(^{29}\) வசன்னசு நிந்தவை வாக்கு வரண திருக்கத்தினை

சம்பந்தா சுதைக்குறிள் மக்கள் கைசாக்கு காகசான்ற

சுந்தரசத்குறிள் ரம்மு தின் (தி) அர்த்தநா ஆறினா

மக்கள் பெறகுறிள் கிருத்தி பெர்த்ருகள்.... (சம்பந்தாசத்தினை - கண்கரை 250-252)
Tamil month of Adi (July, August). The festival is celebrated for the birth of the Tamil month of Aadi. A lot of festivals are celebrated in the month of Adi. This is the beginning of all the festivals during the festival season. Once Adi festival starts all other festivals follow one by one. During the month of Thai and Adi sun changes directions so it is celebrated in that way. Sundays, Tuesdays and Fridays of this month are auspicious.

No wedding or other similar functions are celebrated during Adi (June, July).

The 18th day of Adi, usually August 2, is observed as “Aadi Perukku” a day of offerings and prayers to those rivers, which mean so much to the lives and prosperity of the people.

The day is an occasion for rejoicing particularly for those living on the banks of the great river Cauvery and its branches and tributaries.

Every Friday is celebrated as “Aadi Velli.” On the first Friday we make ‘kozhukkattai’ (sweet item) for Lord Ganesha. We make coconut milk ‘payasam’ on Fridays. The new moon day of this month is celebrated as “Aadi Amavasai” (New Moon Day) which is to remember our ancestors who have reached God. Donations will be
made on that day. The Pooram star of this month is celebrated as “Aadi Pooram” as the birthday of Maha Vishnu. It is celebrated in all temples in a grand manner.

On this day people take head bath and go to temples. They listen to Goddess Amman songs.

‘Adilaksharachana’ is performed to Shanmuganathan temple for twenty five days beginning from the 1st day of this month. On the twenty fifth day homa, dharpana and mahabisheka (traditional ceremonies) are performed to the goddess and the Ursava deity is taken round the street in silver-car.

‘Adi Pathinettam Perukku’, on the 18th day of this month the Pathinettam Perukku festival is conducted at the Shanmuganathan Temple. The pujas are offered to the ‘Saptamantrikas’, or the seven Virgins, who are the personifications of the Seven rivers, asthra devas, people prepare a variety of dishes and feast themselves as a mark of beginning of an auspicious period of prosperity.

The Adipura festival is celebrated at the Kunrakudi temple simply for nine days to commemorate the penance performed by goddess Parvati. It is believed that Lord Siva appeared before here
on the full moon day. The Adi Pura festival begins the next day of the Pathinettam Perukku and continues for 11 days.

**Vinayaka Festival**

Vinayaka Chathurthi found its way into Tamil Nadu during the 7th Century. The *Senapati* (army chief) Paranjothi during the reign of Narasimha Varman (625 – 645 A.D), the Pallava King of Kanchipuram chased and defeated Pulikesin II at Vatapi, the capital of the Chalukya Kingdom and returned with great booty. Along with the loot he brought Vinayaka idol from Vatapi and installed it in a temple at Thiruchengattankudi, his native place. This temple is still known as Ganapatheeswaram. The General is later on popularly known as *Siru thondar or Sekkilar*. Attam of Kunrakudi. (a kind of festival)

**Kanda Shasti Festival (Iyppasi)**

This festival is conducted during the month of *Ayppasi*. It is based on a legendary story that tells about the destruction of the

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30 Vincent A. Smith, The Oxford History of India, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1958, p.222.

31 Sekkilar was a great Saivite Poet. He was the Minister and close associate of Kulothunga Chola II (1133-1150 A.D) He composed 4000 poems. He explained “in his poems”, The Tamil Culture, Civilization, life style, people’s likes etc. It was called the epic, ‘Periyapuram’.
demon called Surya’ by Lord Muruga. The Kanda Shasti festival is celebrated for seven days at Kunrakudi Village temple. For the first five days ‘Lord Muruga idol is taken on procession. On the sixth day the Surasamhara one of the most spectacular processions to be ever witnessed in car street. The huge giant sized images of the asuras\(^ {32} \) namely Gajamuka, Taraka, Singamuka and Surapadma are moved on uplifted chariots and are encountered and destroyed by Lord Muruga with his spear at four different cardinal points in the radha veethi (car street). After the Samhara are over Lord Murugan climbs up the hill back.

On the seventh day Lord Muruga married Valli. The car street setting forms like an open air theatre. The temple priest who acts on behalf of the Lord is the main actor and other personnel who moved the demons were the other actors of the play. Thus the whole festival seems to be a folk drama acted in the open air theatre. That is why it is popularly said that a ritual is the enactment of myth. Thus the temples from the earlier times have been not only the places of worship but also emporium of Arts.

\(^ {32} \) Asura: The word has long been used as a general name for the enemies of the gods. In this sense a different derivation has been found for it; the source is no longer ‘ask’ ‘breath’ but the initial ‘a’ is taken as the negative prefix and ‘a-sura’ signifies not a good hence, according to some, arose the word ‘sura’ commonly used for ‘a god’. 
Shasti vrata

The Kanda Shasti Festival is mainly drawn out from the puranic stories and the bhakti literature, Kandapurana vividly described the war between Lord Muruga and Surapadma. It is a customary vow called Shasti vrata or fasting is observed by the followers of the Muruga cult. It is one of the three vratas that are being observed by the devotees of Muruga. The other two vratas are Karthkai vrata and Sukravana Vrata.

Thiru Karthikai Festival (Karthikai)

The lighting of oil lamps has long been a traditional custom in India. Believe to light the way for goddesses Lakshmi, most Indian homes light the lamp at sun set in the Pooja room. This lamp is usually lit by the Lady of the house or the daughter-in-law who is believed to be a personification of goddess Lakshmi. During the lunar month of karthikai, from November 15 to December 15, the oil lamp acquires significance. Every evening at sunset, two lamps are lit on the threshold of each house for the entire month. On the full moon day is the festival of Thirukarthigai or karthigai Deepam. On this day, oil lamps are lit throughout the house at sun set. The flickering lamps silhouetting the house against the darkness create a
magic spell to the occasion. There are many explanations for this custom. This is the time of the year when the days are at their shortest. Darkness falls by early evening. In the years before electricity, the custom probably served to illuminate the dark road for weary travels hurrying to reach the nearest shelter. Goddess Lakshmi too could probably do with the extra light at this time of the year.

The *Karthikai* festival is one of the ancient festivals in Tamil Nadu. There are references in sangam literature. This festival is conducted at the hill temple for ten days. The ‘*Utsava*’ deity is mounted on a ‘*Chapparam*’ and is taken in procession for the first nine days on the Karthikai day on golden Peacock and then on chariot. In the evening the *Karthikai deepam* is lighted. In addition to this lighting of “*Chokkappanai*” is also performed. While the temple priest light the *Deepam* on the *sthamba* all the devotees worship it with the utterance “Hara Hara”\(^{33}\) Then he lights the *Chokkpanai*. It is a gay of celebration.

*Chokkapanai* is a tall stem of palmyra planted on the ground in front of the temple and thick cluster of Palmyra leaves and dried

\(^{33}\) “Hara-Hara” one of the name of God Siva.

twigs and fastened around them. Then the whole structure is set to fire, by the temple priest. The huge conflagration provides an enjoyable sight. The devotees took the holy ash and applied it on their fore-head with great piety. The *dipa sthamba*\(^{34}\) and the lighting the lamp form the great tradition. They may be called the permanent structures. The setting of the *chokkapani* may be said as a fold or temporary structure. Thus the great tradition and the folk or little tradition fluid a place side by side in the Karthikai festival celebrated in Kunrakudi.

Another feature of the Karthikai festival is the throwing of various cereals. Generally grains like paddy, ragi, maize, kambu are thrown while the devotees enter into the temple. Most of the them will be the first crop and the throwing act may be considered as thanks offering to Lord Muruga.

The women folk take part in large number in the karthikai festival. Throughout this month they light the lamps and keep them in rows both in and out of their dwelling places and thus it appears to be a festival of lights. One the *Karthikai Deepam* day the villagers bring oil and other essentials for lighting the temple lamps.

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\(^{34}\) Dipasthumba is a circular oil lamp with fire separate wicks borne by a stem standing on a circular base.
Thai Pusam

‘Thai Pusam’ festival is associated with Lord Muruga, the son of Siva and Parvathy, according to tradition Muruga’s birth star was ‘Pusam’. He was born in ‘Thai’ the Tamil month. Hence ‘Thai Pusam’ day has been auspicious for the Hindus and they celebrate the day in all grandeur and festivity. It is an important festival in Kunrakudi because a major temple is dedicated to Shanmugaswamy otherwise known as Muruga.

The festival which commences with flag hoisting is celebrated for ten days. For five days the idol of Muruga used to be carried in procession along the streets by the ardent devotees.

On the sixth day morning the divine marriage of Lord Muruga and Devasena was performed and in the evening Muruga married another namely Valli. At night the newly wedded couple are mounted on the gold chariot and are taken in procession. In front of this procession the village folk people perform Kavadi Attam and other folk dances\(^35\) like Karakattam and Poikkal kuthirai.

\(^{35}\) Folk dance represents the achievements and accomplishments of the folk whose creativity was in no way less significant to that of the elite. In away their traditional art forms illustrate their own life style and experiences depicting their real joy and despair in various forms.

On the seventh day, the full moon day, the deity is taken to the banks of the temple tank for a bath and in the temple wooden car drawn by thousands of devotees. It is widely believed that taking a holy dip into sacred waters on the *pusam* day will ward off all sins. So devotees who visit Kunrakudi on this day take a dip in the temple tanks along with the Lord Shanmuganatha on the *Pusam* day.

On the eighth and ninth days of the festival the *ursava murties* appear in ivory palanquine and *chappara* in the mornings and on a golden horse and golden peacock during the night respectively.

On the tenth day the floating festival (நூற்றாண்டு கோடைதெய்வம்) is celebrated in the temple tank. Devotees belonging to Nattukottai Chettiar community and other communites in and around Ramanathapuram District, Pudukottai District, Tanjavur District and Trichy District undertaking pilgrimage to Palani\(^{36}\), one of the great size abodes of Lord Muruga by *Patha Yathra*. Kunrakudi is the main starting point to Palani patha yathra (Journey by foot).\(^{37}\) The

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\(^{36}\) Palani is one of the important six Murugan Pilgrime Centres. It is situated in Dindigul District of Tamil Nadu. 38 km from Dindigul railway junction, accessible by bus and it is a rail head between Dindigul and Coimbatore of Tamil Nadu. This temple is 1001 steps from foot of hill to the top. The presiding deity is called Dhandayuthapani. Many important festivals are celebrated in Palani, like Thaipoosam, Panguni uthiram, Vaikasi Visakam, Skanda sasti, Adi Krithigai and Karthigai Deepam.

\(^{37}\) The scholar participated the ‘Patha Yathra’ past 28 years from 1977 to till date.
devotees cover the distance from Kuntrakudi to Palani in 7 days. The Pilgrims include men, women and children. They rest in seven different places during the patha yathra. The kavadis started from Kuntrakudi. They sing devotional songs in praise of Muruga.

**Panguni Uthiram Festival (March - April) in Kuntrakudi**

The ‘Panguni Uthiram’ festival is the most important festival celebrated in Kuntrakudi in March and April on the day ‘Uthiram’ asterism is on the ascend. The festival is conducted for ten days at the Shanmuganathan Temple, Kuntrakudi. Thousands and thousands of people participate and worship the ‘Panguni Uthiram’ festival in Kuntrakudi.

On the first day ‘Panguni Uthiram’ festival begins with flag hoisting on the suitable day of Panguni Karthigai day. “

- பார்முக்தியில் காந்திலிங்கம் பார்முக்தில் பார்முக்தில் பார்முக்தில்

- துறவைகளுடன் மீன்டூர் மீன்டூர் மீன்டூர் - மீன்டூர் மீன்டூர்

- மேற்மூதின் மேற்

- கொல்லுவைகளுக்கு கொல்லுவை 214 - 215.
First day night Lord Shanmuga is mounted on silver vehicle. *Nema Nattars*\(^{38}\) are main functionaries of this function.

The *Panguni Uthiram* day indicate to the change of seasons from winter to summer. Folk elements are commonly found interlinked and inseparable in this festival. The major components of the *Panguni Uthiram* festival may be classified in the categories are Participants, Myth, Folk songs, like *pallu*\(^{39}\) Folk dances, Folk music and musical instruments, Folkway of life, Folk worship. On the tenth day *Panguni Uthiram* Festival, the *ursava murthees* are richly dressed and bedecked with jewels in different styles throughout the festival. But the procession is undertaken. (See Appendix – 5) equivalent months of English and Tamil).

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\(^{38}\) Nemam is a near by village of Kunrakudi. The village leading personalities are called Nema Nattras. They are the heads of the village.

\(^{39}\) Pallu, a kind of dance drama played mainly by the pallars, (Scheduled caste) as untouchable agricultural community, was also a popular entertainment in Pallan who is under the spell of his younger wife, Ilayapalli, neglecting his routine work which his landed resents. His elder wife, *Mutt* appalli accuses him of his too much attachment to his Ilayapalli ignoring his duty and her totally. The pallan for the negligence of his duty is severely punished and is kept under captivity which evokes the sympathy of his elder wife, who, finally out of conjugal affection released him from his capitivity.

Kavadiattam\(^{40}\)

This is a regular feature connected with the *kavadi* during the festival in Kunrakudi may be described as a traditional folk dance. During the *Panguni Uthiram* festival these dances can be found at the top. At the base of the Kunrakudi hill and at the *Thogaiyadi Vinayagar* temple, women folk also take part in these *kavadiattams*. Their different movements and patterns in the kavadi dances are spectacular. The *Kavadiattam*, some times accompanied by *Puraviattam*, *Kollattam*, *Kummi*, *Mayilattam*,\(^{41}\) *samiyattam*, *karagattam* and *velanattam*. Thus there is the overlapping of such dances are not uncommon. In almost all the folk dances circular formation is inevitable *Kavadiattam* is of no exception to this also

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\(^{40}\) Kavadiattam: Kavadi a decked wooden bar with arches decorated with silkeloth, beads and peacock feathers at both ends is carried on the shoulders to propitiate Lord Muruga who resides at his Padiveedus (military camps as chief of the celestial body) which the devotees with extreme devotion and deep faith would visit on important festivals like "Pankuni Uthiram". As a token of gratitude and extreme religious faith. His devotees would carry Kavadi to all His padiveedus which are symbolic of Indunban carrying the hillock hung on both ends of the poll. Sometimes, his devotees as a mark of devotion and faith, pierced their tongues with a sharp copper needle to rid of anger, lust ego and so on. By singing of "Kavadi Sindhu" the dancer marked his steps gracefully. With great skill, he would balance his "Kavadi" on his shoulders back and head to amuse the audience. A skilful performer would take it form his shoulders to head where it would be manipulated in various ways to the better amazement of the onlookers. From there, it would be taken to the bridge of the nose, chest, stomach and even to the knee cap without the aid of the hands.

\(^{41}\) The entertainment of Tamil Nadu like Puraviattam (during house play) Kollattam, Kummi, Mayilattam were popular and attached huge crowd before the advent of the talkies, which at present have become a very popular source of entertainment, op, cit., p.259.
considered as religious offering to Lord Shanmuganathan. Kunrakudi Shanumuganathan temple is always seen in a festival mood. Devotees of Muruga visit this temple in large numbers everyday. The festival of this Kunrakudi Shanmuganathan temple are conducted on the basis of science of astrology, and on planetary movements and stars.

During the celebration of festivals folk arts like Karagattam, Kavadiattam, performed besides the practice of Valam varuthal, Karthigai Deepam Vilakku and Chockapanai(Item of deepam festival). These were part of religious festivals since ancient times. The Mutt had to make necessary arrangements for those. In fact the Mutt get lot of income through the offerings of the devotees and endowments and donations from donors. Though the festivals and celebrations are religious in features, reflection of material culture also could be seen. However, the Mutt played a significant role in the arrangement and fool proof regulation of the celebrations. Hence the scope for misunderstanding allegations are marginalised and thereby the unity of the village is maintained. Harmony exists in the village.
Free Meal Centres of Nattukottai Chettiar’s Families

Kunrakudi is the head quarters of Chettinadu. Nattukottai Chettiers\textsuperscript{42} are living in the area. There are 76 villages in the Chettinadu. Area, divided east, west and south divisions. All the Chettiers are devotees of Kunrakudi Murugan. So they put their name in their family members, the various names of Lord Muruga.

Nemam village and Nemam Muruga Temple were the northern boundaries of Kunrakudi of Sivaganga District. Mayilandumparai the hill place, the dancing place of Peacocks were in the north west. A small village named Thulavur was in the south.

\textsuperscript{42} In his “Discovery of India” Jawarhalal Nehru says in Chapter 7 part 9 P.332 as follows:

The Chettys of Madras have also been leaders of business and banking especially from ancient times. The word “Chetty” is derived from the Sanskrit SHRESHTHI the leader merchant guild. The common appellation “Seth” also derived from ‘Sharasthi’ the Madras Chettys have not only played an important part in South India, but they have spread out all over Burma, even in remoter villages.

NILKAN PERUMAL in Glimpses of Chettinadu, 1937, P.P.23., From my own personal observation and study of the chettiar character, I have come to the conclusion that they are one hundred percent Dravidians today living in South India. These people had the least to do with Aryan races which came south from the North. Their individuality, the bond of brotherhood among them, their spirit of adventure, their reverence for the elders of community, their devotion to idol worship and ancestral religion, all these seem to establish that Dravidian blood in them is strong.
Patharakkudi, a village was in the south east. Kovilur, Village in the east and Pillayarpatti\textsuperscript{43} and Vairavanpatti villages in the west.

Four streets are the main streets around the Shanmuganathan Temple in Kunrakudi. They are called Car streets, East car street, West car street, South car street and North car Street. Many important places, Chatrams and Gardens in the street and nearby streets. Residence of Thiruvanmalai Saiva Mutt Leader, dwelling houses of Shanmuganatha Temple workers, Palani Andavar Chatram Annadhana Chatram of Kadan Chettiar, ‘Veda’ training school, daily free meal center of Siva Mutt, free meal center of karthigai chatrams, and the following free meal center under the control of Nattukottai Chettiar. The Chettiar form the majority

\textsuperscript{43} Pillaiyar patti is small village in Sivaganga District, 2 km from Kunrakudi Village. It has a famous vinayagar Temple. Vinayagar was son of sivan, elder brother of Muruga. This is the biggest, ancient well built temple, enshrining a big sized black granite Vinayagar Vigaraha of about twenty feet in height. Built in the Dravidian architectural style, the temple possesses vast courtyards, Spacious mandaps, imposing towers and super sculptural (Temple tank) lying outside the compound is quite entrance and with its clear water it is serving the temple and the visitors to a commendable degree. The garbha graha (the place where the consecrated idol is placed) is very big and the masterly sculptured Vinayaka with its fine Polish and excellent finish raises the hands of the devotees at first sight itself. The agamic worship is offered with utmost devotion. Several mandaps are installed with most adorable deities like Muruga, Parathai etc., Though lying in a remote village, the temple has the biggest vinayaka of the entire state and luring devotees round the year. Several devotional activities are conducted throughout the year. This is preferred for the celebration of auspicious events like marriage birthdays etc.

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Vairampatti is a small village of Tiruppathur Taluk, Sivaganga District, It has an architectural and wonderful Siva Temple. It is 5 kms from Kunrakudi.
population in the villages. O.Siruvayal, Karaikudi, Kottaiyur, Alagapuri, Palavankudi, Konapat, Nachiarpuram, Kanadukathan in Sivaganga District. Royavaram, Kadiapatti, Midhilaipatti villages of pudukottai District usually donate the funds for freemeal scheme. Pasumadam, Nandavanam and Thannirpandals have been established in the car streets. Kunrakudi Adigalar was close associate of Nattukotai Chettiar.

Patron of Arts and Crafts

Kings as lords were well known for their encouragement to arts, crafts and artisans. The temple which houses the King of kings, should not lag behind! That is why we find the temples, especially the bigger ones, acting as the biggest employers and providing the greatest security and encouragement to the artisans and artists. Apart from sculpturing stone images or casting metallic ones, the other arts and crafts associated with the temples can be listed as follows: music, dance, preparation of musical instruments, embroidery work on cloth, tailoring, preparation of perfumes and scents, making of flower – garlands, cooking of special dishes, astrology, building the ratha, etching or embossing on metal plates

used in various ways, making lamp – posts and stands, as also puja vessels in brass, bronze and copper, painting, gold and silver smithy, ivorycraft and so on. Development of these crafts and their flourishing trade over centuries are largely due to the temples.\textsuperscript{45}

The Temple, the Priest, the Social Life

This is the chief responsibility of the head priest and his assistants to maintain the spiritual atmosphere of the temple, a strict code of conduct is enjoined upon them. They are expected to lead a very strict and pure life. They should know all the rituals and ceremonies connected with the temple worship and festivities. They should observe all the rules concerning personal and ceremonial purity. They should perform the pooja with devotion. They should not misuse the temple property in any way. On the other hand they should protect it. They should have genuine concern for the devotees and should treat them with sympathy and understanding.

The Temple and society have exercised an enormous influence on our social life. Apart from keeping the torch of dharma burning aloft, the temple was a great cementing factor in Kunrakudi village. Its shrine and icons have given peace to the frustrated

\textsuperscript{45} ibid., p.p. 123 - 126.
minds. The construction and maintenance of the building have provided employment to the architects, artisans, sculptors and labourers. Religious discourses and musical discourses (pravacanas and harikathas) have helped the propagation of religion, music, dance and other fine arts have received great encouragement and provided pure and elevating type of entertainment to the devotees.

Conclusion

The temple occupied the most central place in the Hindu society. The services rendered by the Kunrakudi Mutt were unique in the sense that they were helpful to develop the living conditions of the villagers. Many schemes, programmes and forums were introduced by the Mutt and some of them were named after great personalities like V.O. Chidambaranar, the Navigator K.Kamaraj the former Chief Minister of India. Jawaharlal Nehru, the former Prime Minister of India. The health programmes aimed at controlling leprosy and the communicable diseases. Sir C.V.Raman Science forum contributed to the development of knowledge of science, environmental awareness etc, among the villagers and students. The Mutt made its mark not only in social development but also in social harmony. The Mutt and Adigalar had great respect for other religions. The Mutt had integrated social life and it had worked for
the advancement of society. The *Mutt* had motivated the people of Kunrakudi to live in peace and amenity by upholding the social values and by encouraging the people in their social endeavour. The social impact of the *Mutt* was due to its religious and secular activities. If the religious activities promoted the maintenance of traditional values, the secular activities of the *Mutt* paved the way for a healthy and harmonious social life aiming at peace and prosperity.