

Temples Thrived As Corporations And Multifarious Social Activities

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Abstract

In the medieval period, in variably the temples of Tamil country played a significant role in the social life of the people and social activities centred on the temples. The temples were served as corporations, founded with the full co-operation of the local existing social strata. This paper throws light on the inscriptions found in these temples, which describe the social structure of those days, the devoted patronage from the ruling Kings, their subordinates and the irrespective of the social strata of medieval Tamilaham.

Key Words: Tamilaham, Varnashrama, Brahmanas, Kihatriyas, Vaisyas, Mangalam, Agaram Brahmapuram, Agraharam, Agra -Brahmadeya, Agra-Brabmadesa, Brahmadesam and Brahmamangalam.

Introduction

In the medieval period, in variably the temples of Tamil country played a significant role in the social life of the people and social activities centred on the temples. Milieu was not only places of worship, but also a powerful social entity¹. The temples were served as corporations, founded with the full co-operation of the local existing social strata. The inscriptions found in these temples describe the social structure of those days, the devoted patronage from the ruling Kings, their subordinates and the irrespective of the social strata of medieval Tamilaham.

Here it is worthwhile to understand the Significance of Temple Studies as a centre of Social activity. In this paper the social activity of temples that's in and around region analysed thoroughly in various spears. The social structure status, infrastructure and various social activities, the epigraphic data has analyses through, various research tools and techniques. Social activity and existing social status have been made use of this paper.

The communal commitment, their temple patronage and their professional involvement undertaken of the temples would prove to be useful to the present society and show a through picture on social strata², social involvement on temple activities, and existence of various social responsibilities for understanding the temples even now the hub of contemporary society. In viewing to tackle challenges of changing scenario in Social activity, the need was felt that the temple on those days managed the social environment in a scientific manner. Thus, the past history on the temple Social activity teaches us several responsibilities and impacts to the present

generation. Yet all people, who were united in promoting and preserving the traditions from turning extinct. that way, had a major share as courts of justice, centres of learning, libraries, public record offices, centres of art and culture, employer, 'Consumer, bank and feeding centres'³. This paper throws light on the multifarious social activities of the temples of medieval Tamil Country. This current paper supply ample evidences and knowledge on medieval society by understanding the current social issues through their Social cohesion.

Most of the temples run various educational institutions and some of them served as higher education centre. Besides these temples also run charity hospitals in order to perform the task of corporate social responsibility. To assist the emperor in his administration and thrived the untold, unexpected upheaval of the country. In the medieval period, temples performed multifarious Social activities in and around their precincts⁴. The temples extended their helping hands in various ways to hundreds of devotees, surrounding masses, promoted the law and order through traditional practices in the various parts of the Tamil country. Thus the temples not only catered to the physical needs of the people, but also to their mental and spiritual elevation. While the upper caste men had concentrated in the spiritual and educational matters, the lower caste men had rendered the temple routine activities through their fundamental works in manual labour. It is evident from several records that except the artists and artisans, no educational opportunities were rendered for their earnest services in these temples⁵.

The society of the medieval Tamilaham was caste-based. The Varnashrama system was assimilated local conditions. The inscriptions from these temples reveal their respective social strata, the sub-castes sprouting from them, the position of women, the status of devadasis in the and their endowments⁶.

In Tamil country, there was work-based division and not caste-based division existed in Sangam age. In subsequent the Pallava period, the caste based division emerged in the Tamil society such as Brahmanas, Kihatriyas, Vaisyas and Sudras. The Brahmanas who were well-versed in Vedic studies and well-versed in all Sutras completed the religious works of this temple. Occupied the highest place in society and had become an integral part of social strata since the 6th century A.D.⁷ They were respected and honoured by the people of all Strata. They partly involved themselves in religious activities and partly interpreted Vedas, Puranas and Upanishadas in the educational institutions, while festivals conducted in the Temples. In addition, Epic stories were also narrated to the common men.

Though they were a small fraction in the society, they enjoyed the support of the public and the King alike. Rajendra I Chola following his invasion of the Gangetic plains brought with him 2000 Brahmin families and helped them to settlement down in the Chola Kingdom⁸. This paved the way for their permanent settlement in Tamil country and later on to other parts of Tamil Country. The Chola rulers were followed the tradition of the Pallavas and enforced the Varnasrama dharma in their country⁹.

The villages inhabited by the Brahmins well versed in Vedas and these settlements were called Sathurvedimangalam¹⁰. Usually the Brahmin settlements were known in various names such as Mangalam¹¹, Agaram Brahmapuram¹², Agrapharam¹³, Agra –Brahmadeya¹⁴, Agra-Brabmadesa, Brahmadesam and Brahmamangalam¹⁵. The settlements were provided with all facilities. The Brahmins were respected and honoured. They also acted as **Rajagurus** to the Kings¹⁶. These highly educated and diplomatic Brahmins grabbed the favour of the ruler and served under him as advisors and administrators. Most of the Chief Ministers and Commanders-in-Chief of the army were the Brahmins. King s appointed them in their court to dispense justice. They got recognition for their posts and received several concessions and grants from the ruled.

Trade was common to Vaniyars. The Vaniyars belonged mostly to urban areas. The Vellalas were by and the Vellalas were by and large rural community. Traders carried on inland and international commerce by transporting their merchandise in carts and on the back of animals. There was overseas commerce during the, Chola reign. Trade Guilds like Nanadesikan, Disaiyayirathu Ainootruvar and Valzanjar engaged in overseas trade and the Government patronised them to a large extent¹⁷.

The concluding part states that from this it is learnt that the Inscriptions record the active interest on the society centres. Likewise, the development of the various social strata of villages and the towns were closely associated with the temple. As temples were the only recognised institutions, people gave due respect and importances to them. The political, Social and cultural activities that prevailed in this period compelled the

people to depend more on temples. People began to settle very close to the **devadana** and **brahmadana** lands and considered temple their guide and saviour. Thus, the temple-oriented society developed. Thus this paper clarifies that the whole life of the people and the society was mostly centered on the temple.

References

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3. Kuram Plates: Line 17. S.I.I. Vol. I, p. 152.
4. There has been a doubt whether the Pallavas were Brahmins. But they described themselves as 'Brahmakshtriyas.' The Probability is, as stated earlier, they were Brahmins who took to fighting and thus became Kshatriyas in fact.
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