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Review Of Research



THE PATRONAGE OF KONERIRAJAPURAM TEMPLE BY AN OUTSTANDING ROYAL QUEEN OF THE CHOLA



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ABSTRACT

Temple the very name given to our abodes of deities establishes its vital importance in the cultural as well as religious life in India.

Are some of the common adages signifying the importance of the temples. Temple have been in existence in our land from time immemorial. India is a land of temples. Particularly south India is adorned with thousands of temple. Tamilnadu has the maximum number of temples.

KEYWORDS:revival of literature and religious, Royal Queen .

INTRODUCTION:

The Cholas Empire under vijayalaya and his successors witness the revival of literature and religious. Among the various Hindu religious sects saivism reached its zenith during the reign of Cholas, covered roughly a period of four centuries from 850 A.D to1279 A.D. During this period nearly three thousand Siva temples were constructed, As



the Chola Rulers were ardent saivites the religion Saivism was perhaps given more importance than other religious.

Saivism is one of the oldest and is still the living religion in India, the origin of Saivism is obscure. This religion prevailed in India before the age of Indus valley civilization. But T.P.sittalingam went to the extent of saying that it existed before the stone age. In Manimekalai, one of the five great epics, words like saivism and Siva mentioned.² This proves the prevalence of Saivism from very early centuries. Saint Tirumular, author of Thirumanthram who lived during the pallava period, divide`s saivism in to four i.e.,

asutha saivism.³ kadum Sutha saivam,⁴ Marka saivam⁵ and sutha saivam.⁶ It proves the practice of worshipping Siva in different ways and its prevalence from the early days of the Pallavas.

In the words of K.A. Nilakanda Sastri, "under the Cholas of the time of Vijayalaya may be said to commence the silver age of South Indian Saivism" difficult as it is to propose precise dates. In the present state of the evidence, we may still be certain that sacred hymns of the Nayanmars and Alvars were arranged in canonical form from some time in the 11th century A.D.⁷

A Thanjavur inscription furnishes an unusually full view of the state of Saivism at the time of Cholas. South Indian Saivism appears to have had a live contact with Saivism in the rest of India as may be seen from the inscription of Rajendra I, providing for the annual supply of a large quantity of grain as *Acaiyabhoga* to Udaiyar Sarva Saiva Panditha, who was performing the worship in the Thanjavur temple and his pupils and their pupils. Whether they lived in the Aryadesa, Madhyadesa or Gaudadesa. Inscriptions of the reign of Kulottunga III give evidence of the existence of this connection between Northern India and South in late Chola time as well.⁸

The recovery of *Devaram* and composition of *Periyapuranam* otherwise called *Thiruthondar Puranam*, the celebrated work *Sekkilar*, a contemporary of Kulottunga II influenced the lives and thoughts of the people almost incessantly from the date of its composition. Thus Saivism became popular religion under imperial Cholas. To the development of Saivism during the time of imperial Cholas, the role of harem is not negligible.

Many temples were constructed during the time of imperial Cholas. The glory of the Chola temple rocketed up not only by the construction of temples by rulers but also by their queens. The Chola queens were the devotees of Lord Siva, but still they erected Vishnu shrines and gave endowments to Vishnu temples and Jinalaya. Memorable services to the temples were rendered only by some Chola queens. They are Sembiyan Mahadevi, wife of Gandaraditya (953-957 A.D.), Kundavai, the elder sister of Rajaraja I the Great (985-1014 A.D.) and the wife of Vallavaraiyar Vanthiya Devar and Lokamahadevi, the principal queen of Rajaraja I, the Great (985-1014). Sembiyan Mahadevi and Kundavai were responsible for Rajaraja's efforts for the promotion of Saivism⁹ and for the construction of the very famous Brahadeeswara temple at Thanjavur.

Sembiyan Mahadevi, the dowager queen of Gandaraditya, was widowed early in life, when her son Uttama Chola was too young to be crowned king. She spent lavishly in renovating old and ruined temples, in building new temples and in making presents of the images of Gods and Goddesses with valuable gold ornaments set with pearls, rubies and diamonds and made gift of gold and silver utensils to several temples. Her charities extended throughout the Chola mandalam.

She constructed more than 100 temples the foremost among the temples built by Sembiyan Mahadevi is the one dedicated to Umamahesvarar at Tirunallam (which was the ancient name of Konerirajapuram), a flourishing village about 21 kilometers on the road from Kumbakonam to Karaikal in Thanjavur district. It was erected in memory of her husband and named after him. According to the inscriptions, it was built some time before the third regnal year of her son Uttama Chola (that is, before A.D. 972), this finds mention in an inscription (635 of 1909)¹⁰ dated in the eighth year, 151st day of the reign of Uttama Chola, of which more will be said later.

Svasti sri gandaraditta devar madevaigalar
Sri sembiyan ma deviya
Rtammundaiya tirumaganar sri madurantaka
Devarna sri uttma cholan tiru rajyam seyaada-
Rulanirkat tammudaiyar sri gandaraditta dvar

*Tiru namattal tiru nallam udaiyarkku
Tirukkarrali eluundarulivittu it tirukkarraliyi-
Leye tirunallam udaiyarai tiruvadit –to-
Lu-kbinraraha elundarulivitta sri gandaraditta
Devar ivar*

Hail prosperity! madevadigalar alias the great Sembiyan Mahadeviyar, queen of Gandaradiya devar, constructed in the name of her husband ,viz., the glorious Gandaradiya, a stone temple to the Lord of Tirunallam when her illustrious son the great Madurandaka devar alias Uttma Chola was graciously ruling. This is the image of the glorious Gandaradiya devar, which was caused to be made in this sacred stone temple in the pose of worshipping the sacred feet of the Lord.

The inscriptions found on the walls of this temple throw considerable light on the growth of the temple. An inscription (638-1909)¹¹ of the sixth year refers to a grant of land for maintaining a perpetual lamp in favour of the shrine of Adithyevaram Udaiyar in this temple. The inscription of the eighth year of Uttama chola briefly referred to earlier, is important and interesting as it records the deliberations of the Assembly of Tirunallam . Briefly it mentions the following facts.

That Sembiyan Mahadevi built the stone temple at Tirunallam (konerirajapuram) and that in the third year of Uttma Chola she made a gift of two velis of land with an income of Uttama chola she made a gift of two velis of land with an income of 224 *kalams* (a volumetric measure of grain) of paddy, bought from the Assembly of Tirunallam, for raising a flower gardens called Gandaradittan, apart from other garden (*nandavanappuram*). it goes on to say that on the 240th day of the seventh year of the reign of Uttama chola, the king was camping in the palace at Pichchankoil on the northern side of Kadambur and that it was represented to him by one Parakesari Muvendavelan, who was in charge of the affairs of the state, that his (the king's) mother Sembiya Madavi desired to increase the scale of expense of the God and to provide for the feeding of 25 Brahmanas for the merit of her deceased husband . in deference to his mother desire, The king ordered that the panchavara paddy of 600 kalams derived from 12 *velis* of land in Pungude (an old devadana village dedicated to the Lord of this temple but given to the king) and the panchavara paddy of 200 kalams from four velis of land at Musitaikkudi, were to be gifted to the temple. On representation that even this was insufficient an additional grant of 12 *velis* of land yielding an income of 1590 kalams in the village of ilanalam was made. In the eighth year while the king camping at karaikattupanaiyur, he issued an order foregoing a part of his share of the income from Tirunallam and diverting it to the temple Later the king ordered that 2½ *velis* out of the 70 *velis* of land at Tirunallam be made tax-free and made over for temple use.

With the income of the temple thus augmented expenditure on various items of activity was allocated by the royal officer in consultations with the sabha. Every aspect of temple activity-from the celebration of Sembiyan Mahadevi's birthday under her natal star yeshtha and other festivals to the provision of houses for temple servants, hymnists and others- was taken care of

This inscription of the eighth year is a valuable record of contemporary practices and throws considerable light on the role of the temple in the day-to-day life of the community and the deference with which trusts donations were treated the commonly held theory that the temple was merely a place of worship would seem to be at variance with the facts. It was the nerve-centre of the social. Political and administrative activity of the village, the town the city as well. As regional units like the Nadu, Kurrum, and Taniyar. The inscription also throws light on the mode of documentation and registration of deeds prevalent in those ancient days. This document. like copper plate grants, is attested by the king's councilors (*karrum araikkiinra adhikarigal*), other royal officers and

representatives of the local bodies other royal and local administrative functions' are also mentioned in the document .such as the grant (*anatti*), the revenue officers (*puravu vari*), the royal secretaries (*vaykkelvi*),and the account (*varipottagam*), who incidentally ,is the engraver of the king`s order(*mugavetti*).

There are two more inscriptions of the 11th and 14th years of Uttama Chola relating to gifts of land, one for maintaining lamps and the other for offerings to the shrine of Ganapati in the temple of Tirunallam.

On the south wall of the central (main) shrine, there is a stone sculpture of Sattan Gunabhattan alias Haraacharana Sekharan of Alattur , who erected this stone temple under the royal order of Uaiya pirattiyar (Sembiyan Mahadevi),The title of Rajakesari Muvendavelan was conferred on him in appreciation of his services.

Besides these inscriptions ,which are of immediate relevance to our study, there are a number of inscriptions found in the temples covering a span of nearly 250 years from Uttama Chola`s days to those of Rajaraja III (A.D.1242). They reveal a variety of interesting facts ; that a covered veranadah (tiru nadai malaigai) was put up by one Arumolidevan, alias vayaanattaraiyan of Adanur ; that the gopuram was a gift of Mudalipillai of Vengipuram ;that a silver image of deity, Umamahesvarar and a copper image of Chandesvarar were gifted to the temple by one Nakkan nallattadigal,a servant of the palace harem (velam) and a member of the *Rajaraja terinja kaikolar* (12th year of *Rajaraja* 1) An image of the Sun God was probably worshipped , as can be inferred from a gift of seven kasus to Adityeswaram Udaiya Mahadevar in the 15th year of Rajaraja I. there is an inscription (639 of 1909)¹² in this temple belonging to the fifth year of Rajendra I which refers to a gift made by Alwar pirantakan kundavai pirattiyar , another member of the family of the Cholas , who is said to have been living (at the time the gift was made) at the palace of Palaiyaru near Kumbakonam. Like Sembiyan Mahadevi, she was devoted to temple-building and performed many acts of piety. Later,in the 17th year of Rajendra I,Queen Arindavan mahadevi set up an image of Kshetrapala (632 of 1909)¹³.

This temple must have been in existence even in the days of Appar (A.D seventh century) as can be inferred from his Devaram hymans. he calls this place Tirunallam and the Lord, Umaikkunallavan (He that is dear to Uma). But the present structure is a foundation Sembiyan Mahadevi during whose time the deity was known by the name of Tirunallam Udaiyar. We gather from an inscription (633-34 1909)¹⁴ of the 11th year of Rajendra I that during his rule it was also known by name of Umakkunallan. With the passing of the years, the name of the deity underwent frequent changes .we find from an inscription of the seventh year of Rajendra II(i.e Kulottunga I) that it was called Madurantakiiswaram Udaiyar, perhaps named after the daughter of prince Rajendradeva II who was married to the Eastern Chalukya Prince Rajaendra II, who later ascended the Chola throne as Kulotunga I In this days, according tom an inscription of his 47th year the deity was also called Kailsam Udaiya Mahadevar at Tirunallam. This fully evolved temple of the early Chola period and is very well preserved .Built by Sembiyan Mahadevi. The dowager queen in memory and in the name of her husband Gandaradiya, this temple is worth a close study for its architectural and artistic wealth. an interesting feature is the existence of a panel of portraits of the king and the queen worshipping the Linga. There is also a portrait of the architect of the temple, installed here.

The temple, facing west, consists of a *Garbhgriha* 6.10 meters square, and an antarala with a grille connecting an *ardhmandapa* which project 6.10 meter forward. The Basement mouldings are plain. On the outer walls of the *garbhagriha*. There are *devakosthathas* housing Brama north, Lingodbhava in the east and Dakishnamurthi in the south. The eastern devakosthaha is flanked by two short and two tall pilasters, surmounted by a *markaratorna*, in the center of which is installed a

mainature figure of *Gajalaksmi*. on the outer surface of the *arthamandba* walls are the sculpture of Natesa Ganesa and Agastya all on the southern side; while on the northern side are the figure of Bhikastanar, Durga and Ardhanari,

Enriching the *garbhagriha*, the *antarala* and the *ardhamandapa* is a covered veradah supported by pillars known in the local inscription as *tiru nadai malagai*. finally. there is the addition of a mukhamandpa measuring 10.3 meters in length.

Konerirajapuram and Tiruvengadu have the largest and perhaps the finest collection of early Chola bronzes, most them dating back to the Sembian age. The bronze Bhogesvari at konerirajapuram is perhaps one of the earliest of Sembian castings. Other icons cast in this age are those of Tripuravijayam, Risbhavahana devar and Ganapati .There are two small metal of Nataraja, also attributable to this age; in addition, there is a set of metal image of Nataraja, and consort presumably belonging to the age of Rajaraja I.15

Sempiyan mahadevi the famous chola Queen enthusiastically served this temple in many ways. She only responsible for construction of this temple not only that rendered the meritorious services in a wonderful manner and most of the images enclosed by her. For the maintenance of these deities of jewel and vessels' were bestowed. This shows her deep interest to product the religion through a banner of donation.

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